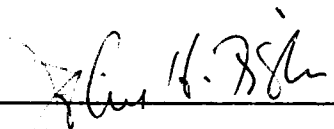


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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Mary Etta Eckhart entitled "'Ruthless Rhymes:' Patriotism and Propaganda in Historical Poetry of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.



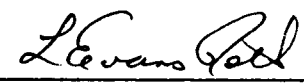
John H. Fisher, Major Professor

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Vice Chancellor
Graduate Studies and Research

"RUTHLESS RHYMES:" PATRIOTISM AND PROPAGANDA IN HISTORICAL POETRY
OF THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Mary Etta Eckhart

August 1981

3053746

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. John Hurt Fisher for his endless guidance and his generosity in spending time giving me invaluable advice and suggestion in all areas of writing. I also wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Jack Armistead and Dr. Allen Carroll, the members of my committee, for their time and interest. Lastly, I will always remember Roberta Roy, Amanda Gunter, and Karen Kalinevitch for their encouragement and their willingness to listen to my "exciting" accounts of battles, sieges, and heroes.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the way historical events are treated in the poems in Rossell Hope Robbins' Historical Poems of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries. This examination focuses on the poets's distortion of historical incidents as seen when we compare events to the way they are described in these poems. In this way we may observe not only which incidents inspired poets most but also the methods minstrels used to appeal to their audiences or to circulate propaganda for political factions.

Four major periods are treated in this study: the Scottish War of Independence, the Hundred Years War, the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, and the Wars of the Roses. It is in this last historical period that propaganda becomes most dominant in poetry.

Examining the poets' distortion of historical incidents, we may see the conflict between purpose and artistry inherent in this type of poetry. In their totally biased viewpoint, manipulation of historical subjects, and unwavering consciousness of the audiences and their reactions, these poets produce verses that are lacking in objectivity. They gloss their treatment of events and thus render their work merely expressions of patriotism or propaganda, without fidelity to details and with no effort to colorfully recreate incidents.

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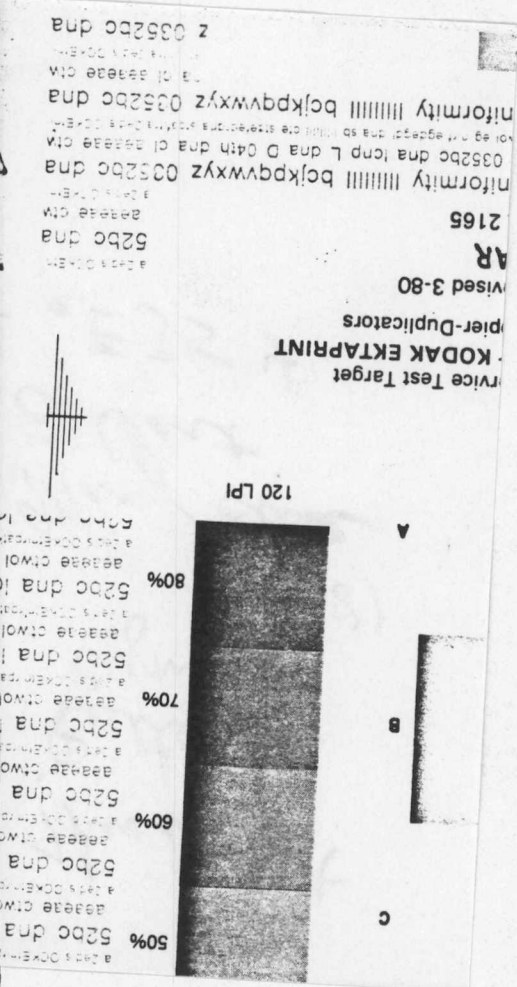
LIST OF ABBREVIATED TITLES

"Advice I"--"Advice to the Court I"	Robbins, p. 203
"Advice II"--"Advice to the Court II"	p. 203
"Agincourt Carol"--"The Agincourt Carol"	p. 91
"Arrest of Suffolk"--"Arrest of the Duke of Suffolk"	p. 186
"Ballade on the Gates"--"Ballade Set on the Gates of Canterbury" . .	p. 207
"Battle of Agincourt"--"The Battle of Agincourt"	p. 74
"Battle of Barnet"--"The Battle of Barnet"	p. 226
"Battle of Northampton"--"The Battle of Northampton"	p. 210
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"Calais, 1347"--"The Siege of Calais"	p. 34
"Calais, 1436"--"The Siege of Calais"	p. 78
"Death of Suffolk"--"The Death of the Duke of Suffolk"	p. 187
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"Insurrection and Earthquake"--"The Insurrection and Earthquake" . .	p. 57
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"Neville's Cross"--"The Battle of Neville's Cross"	p. 31
"Recollection of Henry V"--"A Recollection of Henry V"	p. 108
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"Sudden Fall"--"The Sudden Fall of Princes" p. 174

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INTRODUCTION

. . . It's the height of absurdity. It belongs to Ruthless Rhymes, not to sober history. That is why historians surprise me. They seem to have no talent for the likeliness of any situation. They see history like a peep show; with two-dimensional figures against a distant background.

Josephine Tey
The Daughter of Time

Rossell Hope Robbins' Historical Poems of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries includes one-hundred pieces that are representative of the historical and political poems of this late medieval period, which all told, "number not more than 250 items or less."¹ Robbins excludes most poems exceeding 150 lines and religious and secular poems that had already been published in Carlton Brown's Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, and he includes only a representative selection of the work of Laurence Minot and John Lydgate and the poetry in Digby MS. 102.²

It was not Robbins' intent in the format of the anthology to trace the course of English history through the poetry. He arranges the poems under the following headings: Poems From Harley MS. 2253; War Poems by Laurence Minot from Cotton MS. Calba E. ix; Poems from Digby MS. 102; Popular Struggles I: the Great Revolt; Popular Struggles II: Later Discontent; Popular Ballads; Politics in Song; Commemoration of Kings; Political Prophecies; the First Utopia; the Wicked Age; Critics

¹Rossell Hope Robbins, ed., Preface, Historical Poems of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. vii.

²Robbins, Preface, pp. vii-viii.

of the Lollards; Critics of the Friars; England's Commerce; the Fall of Princes; the Red Rose of Lancaster; the White Rose of York; the Well-Ordered Kingdom; the Will for Peace.

The poems in the anthology fall into the categories of commemorative poetry, handbills and proclamations, complaints, political prophecies, and propangandist poetry.

Though it does not comprise the largest number of poems in the anthology, the commemorative poem is the type that traverses the widest span of history. There are commemorations on the deaths of English kings from Edward I to Edward IV. Obviously, the type of details in these poems was determined by the English people's most recent memories of the king's reign. Though stock phrases are used to glorify departed kings, such as "the well of knighthood," there are not formulas for the commemorations.

Handbills or proclamations are among the shortest poems, in Robbins' anthology. Most were issued by the leaders of the popular revolts, such as the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450. These items often take the form of complaint, stating the grievances of the insurrectors. Other complaints, particularly the numerous short poems included in "the Wicked Age" section and in the section called "Critics of the Friars," tend to state general grievances. Although they may have been timely when they were composed, they contain few references to actual events and thus lose significance with the passage of time. The anonymous "How Goes This World About" is representative of this type of complaint. The speaker bewails the fickleness of professed friends:

As I me lend to a lend,
I herd a schepperde makyn a showte;
he gronyd & seyde with sory syghyng,
A lord, how gos þis word a-bowte!

It gos ful wrong, ho-wo it wyst:
 a frend, ho many ken fro his too?
 to hom I may trewely trost,
 In fayth, I fynde but fewe of þo (ll. 1-8).

The political prophecies included in the anthology are also characteristically vague, but the terms used in these poems are cryptic rather than general. The indirect allusions to future political events prevented the prophecies from being proven wrong and protected the writers from the government's repression of these verses.

The personal diatribes are among the longer poems in the anthology. Because of the poets' desire to abuse their victims, these poems are usually more extensively detailed than others. The authors tend to compile every known grievance against their victims, as in the abusive ballads about Dukes John and Philip of Burgundy, or else they give a satiric treatment of a single incident, sometimes the death of the individual, as in the two poems that treat the Duke of Suffolk's arrest and death.

I would make a distinction between the type of battle poetry that treats the wars with Scotland and France and that which treats the battles in the Wars of the Roses. The former provides details such as the routes of armies, the location of battles, and the tactics of the military leaders. The latter often functions as propaganda, and the authors feel less responsibility to give a detailed account of the fighting. Their interest lies in identifying the conflicting actions and in glorifying the leaders of whom they are partisans. Propagandist poetry also takes the form of handbills and poems of praise for individual lords. This type of verse was mostly composed during the Wars of the Roses. The historical periods treated in these poems begin with

the Scottish War of Independence and end with the Wars of the Roses. Some periods attracted more treatment in verse than others. The largest group of poems is that dealing with the Wars of the Roses, a time when partisanship was rampant and poetry was used as a vehicle to sway public opinion. Some historical periods are curiously unrepresented. The reign of Henry IV inspired very little poetry. Only one poem in the text deals with a specific incident in Henry's reign, the anonymous "The Death of Archbishop Scrope," 1402. This poem only describes Scrope's execution (through dialogue), giving no hint of the circumstances that led to his arrest. There is also a surprising absence of poetry treating the phase of the Hundred Years War between the Battle of Agincourt, 1415, and the Siege of Calais, 1436. I agree with C. L. Kingsford that "It is difficult to suppose that no later incident of the French war in the reign of Henry V, or in the early years of Henry VI, attracted the ballad-makers."³ Such an event as Henry V's daring Siege of Rouen, 1418, would surely have been a topic of great appeal, providing the opportunity to glorify Henry V and England's military power. None of the poems treat the reign of Richard III; this absence should be of interest to historians, since no contemporary poems exist that accuse Richard of murdering his nephews. Tudor propagandist poetry cannot be considered contemporary with Richard, since it was commissioned purely to discredit him.

Although Rossell Hope Robbins was interested in the historical backgrounds of these poems, his interest lay primarily in the verbal

³ Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century (1913; rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, n. d.), p. 240.

similarities between the poems and medieval chronicles. Since I am concerned more closely with the relation of historical events to these poems, I first compiled a list of the historical incidents referred to in the poems, consulting Robbins' notes and, when necessary, deciding the identification of references after reading in secondary historical materials. This process enabled me to perceive which historical events most attracted the poets. I then grouped the particular events under the four historical periods that form the four chapters in this thesis. As a result we may gain an awareness of which incidents inspired minstrels with the most passionate feelings of patriotism and which were exploited most in propaganda.

The omission of particular details of an historical event is even more intriguing than the absence of poetry covering a particular phase of history. A study of the way historical events are treated in poetry reveals much about the relationship between the poet and his audience, and it can lead us to conclusions about the degree of artistry in historical and political poetry. The poet wrote for an audience which he is aware shares his view of an historical incident or one which he wishes to persuade to adopt that view. The audience may be either a select group of military leaders or courtier: the common people of England, or a general audience. The war poetry by minstrels such as Laurence Minot was written for an audience that would have shared Minot's views, while poetry about the Wars of the Roses is intended either to sway public opinion or to bolster the support a particular faction already possessed. This historical poetry is limited by its total commitment to the English point of view when treating international affairs, and its restriction to the view of a particular faction when

dealing with domestic affairs. The result is poetry totally lacking in objectivity. One has only to observe the purpose of this poetry to recognize its biased view of historical incidents. A poem may be intended as glorification, celebration, abuse, or propaganda. Whichever end is sought, the poet will distort the incident he describes whenever necessary to suit the purpose and the audience. The methods the poet uses are the misrepresentation of facts, faulty moral interpretation, effusive glorification, and "loaded" words, bearing connotations such as barbarism, falsehood, and religious suggestions. The body of poetry produced with these techniques is one in which purpose is in conflict with artistry.

CHAPTER I

THE SCOTTISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

"I tell you, I never knew any history except 1066 and 1603."

"What happened in 1603?" Grant asked

"We had the Scots tied to our tails for good.

"Better than having them at our throats every five minutes."

Josephine Tey
The Daughter of Time

Five poems in Historical Poems of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries treat incidents in the Scottish War of Independence; in addition, events foretold in one political prophecy have been associated with the War. The anonymous ballad "Simon Fraser" is English in sympathy, and Rossell Hope Robbins postulates that it was written by a professional minstrel.¹ This long poem of 233 lines opens with a call to "lysten, lordynges, a newe song ichulle bigynne," and later, having digressed several times, the author recollects his task:

Nou ichulle fonge þer ich er let,
ant tellen ou of frisel, ase ich ou by-het (ll. 89-90).

The poet directs his account of Simon Fraser's execution to a general audience (but especially Londoners) who would have been familiar with Fraser's history and also that of the Wars with Scotland. The date of composition is relatively easy to determine: internal evidence, which I shall presently discuss in detail, suggests that the ballad was written between September and November of 1306.

Laurence Minot's ballads on the Scottish wars, "Bannockburn Avenged"

¹Robbins, Notes, p. 253.

and "Neville's Cross," are shorter works that, like "Simon Fraser," bear the mark of minstrel composition. Robbins concurs with the opinion about Minot expressed in the Cambridge History of English Literature, that the poet was "a professional gleeman, who earned his living by following the camp and entertaining soldiers with the recitation of their own heroic deeds."² Like the author of "Simon Fraser," Minot addresses the audience directly, asking them to be silent:

Nou forto tell 3ow will I turn
of batayl of banocburn (rubric).

"Bannockburn Avenged" is a short battle song composed of six six-line stanzas written in 1883. The last line of each stanza condemns the Scots "for paire gile." Minot's longer poem, "Neville's Cross," derives its effect from narrative details rather than from repetition, probably because Minot's interest lay in recounting a single incident in the battle he celebrated instead of rejoicing in the subjugation of the defeated enemy, as he did in "Bannockburn Avenged."

"The Battle of Otterburn" is the latest among these poems on the Scottish War of Independence. That battle was fought in 1388, but the poem was certainly composed after 1402 and possibly after 1449 because the poet prays for the soul of Henry (Hotspur) Percy, who died in 1402, and there is a reference to the Earl of Huntly, a title not created until 1449.³ "The Battle of Otterburn" is an earlier version of the ballads "The Hunting of the Cheviot" and "Chevy Chase," as well as the Scottish "Battle of Otterburn." Olof Arngart, in his recent edition of the English "Battle of Otterburn" and "The Hunting of the Cheviot,"

²Robbins, *Introd.*, p. xxvii.

³Robbins, *Notes*, p. 283.

notes numerous verbal borrowings in the later versions.⁴ "The Battle of Otterburn" is the longest poem on the Scottish wars in Robbins' anthology. Its seventy ballad stanzas present the most dramatic battle account of any of these poems, perhaps because, like "Neville's Cross," it focuses on a single moment in the battle, the legendary single combat between James of Douglas and Hotspur.

The anonymous lament entitled "The Death of Edward I" is distinct from the poems already discussed because its sentiment has little to do with the Scots. Robbins describes this mournful poem as "a free translation of a French song" that also laments Edward's passing, with a new arrangement of stanzas as well as the addition of two new ones, nine and eleven. The poem begins as a lament, then becomes narrative, and finally changes to prayer, concluding with the word "Amen."

"Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy" is also different from the ballads on the Scottish Wars. The dating of prophecies is difficult because they are so vague in their historical references. Authorship is equally difficult to determine. "Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy" has been attributed to a man of that name who died sometime near the end of the thirteenth century and who supposedly predicted the death of King Alexander III of Scotland in 1286. Rupert Taylor expresses doubt as to whether "Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy" was written by this man, concluding that Thomas had "very early got a reputation for prophetic skill" and that "tradition assigned him certain prophecies."⁵ It may be that the writer of the poem titled it as such to lend credibility to the prediction.

⁴ Olof Arngart, Two English Border Ballads: "The Battle of Otterburn" and "The Hunting of the Cheviot" (Lund, Sweden: Berlinska Boktryckeriet, 1973).

⁵ Rupert Taylor, The Political Prophecy in England (1911; rpt., AMS Press, 1967), p. 71.

The exploits and execution of the great Scottish national hero William Wallace are the earliest topics dealt with in the poems on the Scottish War of Independence. Wallace's defeat in the Battle of Dunbar, 23 April 1296, is referred to in "Simon Fraser." The poem describes this devastating Scottish defeat as something of a lesson in war for the Scots, but even more as an indication that they dare not defy Edward I's authority or offer him battle. In discussing Wallace's execution, the poet expresses the hope that the Scottish people will see what has befallen the hero who led them at the Battle of Dunbar and will therefore submit to Edward I's overlordship. He hopes that the sight of the quarters of Wallace's mutilated body will cause the Scots

to penche, þat monie myhten se
Ant drede (ll. 28-29).

This fear, the poet believes, should have already been instilled by the defeat at Dunbar, and he questions

why nolden he be war
of þe bataile of donbar,
how euele hem con spede? (ll. 30-32)

Though no details of the battle are given, it is implicit that the defeat was crushing. At Dunbar the Scots allowed themselves to be deceived into abandoning a strong position on the hill beside the castle in order to give chase to the English, led by John De Warenne, whom they believed to be retreating. The English had, in fact, scattered in order to cross the Spott Burn, but as the Scots descended upon them the English were able to quickly form ranks and overwhelm the spearmen.

Though the author of "Simon Fraser" insists that the Scots take a lesson from their ruin at Dunbar, he also refers to the Battle of Stirling Bridge, 11 September 1297, from which they had reason to derive

much pride. In this battle William Wallace took his revenge on De Warenne and Edward I's hated Treasurer, Hugh Cressingham. But the poet feels that the Scots's pride in this victory is inordinate, especially in the light of the capture and execution of their heroes, Wallace and Fraser. In describing Simon Fraser's arrest, the poet remarks, almost as an aside, that Fraser is in such an abject position that

ys countinaunce abatede eny bost to make
bise side striuelyn (ll. 92-93).

The victory is again recalled in "Bannockburn Avenged." In his celebration of Edward III's victory at Halidon Hill, 1333, Minot refers to the Scottish victory at Stirling Bridge to emphasize what he sees as a Scottish predilection for boasting. In the earlier battle

Skottes of striflin war steren and stout
of god ne of gude men had þai no dout;
now haue þai, þe pelers, priked about,
bot at þe last sir Edward rifild þaire rout (ll. 13-16).

In Minot's eyes the Scots are still riding arrogantly upon the crest of their earlier victory, but such boasting must dwindle now that "sir Edward rifild þaire rout" (l.17). These lines are typical of Minot's characterization of the Scots as pillaging heathens; he plays upon the most negative connotations of the adjectives "steren and stout" (grim and savage) and terms the Scotsmen "pelers" to suggest that their frequent border raids (an activity shared by the English) are the work of black bandits.

These "pelers" had reason to take pride in the Battle of Stirling Bridge. Advantageously positioned on the south slope of Abbey Craig, the hill beside Stirling Castle, Wallace and Andrew Moray shrewdly restrained their troops until enough of Cressingham's men had crossed the narrow bridge. When the Scots charged, the English were impeded by the soft ground of the meadow surrounding them, and reinforcement was impossible

because of the narrowness of the bridge. Barrow's comment on the battle explains the reasons for the Scot's pride in the victory and the bitterness of the English poets's references to it: "A cavalry army of gentlemen-professionals had been defeated by an army of peasant-amateurs. . . . Secondly, and surely an even more bitter blow, an English army had been defeated by Scots. Such a thing had not happened on this scale since the early eleventh century."⁶

The description of William Wallace's execution in "Simon Fraser" reflects the hatred and fear that the Scottish victory at Stirling Bridge and the success of their raids on northern England aroused among Englishmen. The poet presents the execution as a warning to "alle þe gentil-men þat buеп in scotlonde," and indeed Edward I intended Wallace's execution as an example:

þe waleis was to-drawe, seþþe he was an-honge,
al quic biheueded, ys bowels y-brend,
þe heued to londone brugge was send
To abyde (ll. 17-21).

The vehemence of this description reflects the popular view of Wallace in England. The English saw him not only as low-born (the younger son of a knight) but as a complete heathen, the epitome of Laurence Minot's conception of the race. Barrow remarks that references to Wallace in in contemporary chronicles label him

. . . thief, robber, master of thieves, chief of brigands, man of blood, and so forth. In the English popular imagination, Wallace had become an ogre, a monstrous bogey who would skin an Englishman to make a baldric, force nuns to dance naked in front of him, and with a heartless jest, abandon his comrades like the ignoble coward they felt he ought to be.

⁶G. W. S. Barrow, Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), p. 126. I am relying on this source as an authority for dates.

⁷Barrow, p. 139.

The references to Wallace in "Simon Fraser" reflect his reputation as a ruthless pagan, and the description of Simon Fraser himself suggests that, for the author and his audience, Fraser represented "þe traytours of scotlond" towards whom the poet expresses rancour throughout the poem. In the third stanza the author establishes the fact that Fraser's head was sent "To abyde" beside Wallace's on London Bridge, and at this point the poet remarks that Fraser

wes traytour ant fykel,
ant y-cud ful wyde (ll. 23-24).

The poet also reveals an awareness of Fraser's relation to Edward I and to England. Simon Fraser was the lord of Oliver Castle and was of a family that had long served as sheriffs of Tweeddale.⁸ Like his ancestors, Fraser was entrusted with jurisdiction in the region south of Edinburgh known as The Forest. Barrow suspects that Fraser relaxed his vigilance to permit the Scottish raids into the area in 1299 because, though he had superficially supported the English since 1296, his sympathies lay partly with the Scottish patriotic movement.⁹ Later he participated actively on the Scottish side, in 1302 joining Alexander Abernathy and Herbert Morham in an attack on Stonehouse near Strathaven, in 1303 fighting with John (the Red) Comyn at the Battle of Roslin, and in 1305 with Wallace at Hallow. However, "Simon Fraser" omits these examples of Fraser's "fickleness," taking up his movements with his capture after the Battle of Methven in 1306, Robert the Bruce's first pitched battle following his coronation. The poet states that "In þe batayle of kyrkenclyf ffrysel was ytake (l. 91)."

⁸ Barrow, p. 151.

⁹ Barrow, p. 151.

Fraser (fryssel) was actually taken at Linlithgow, near Edinburgh, after the battle. Identifying the date of Fraser's capture as "by-fore seint bartholemeus masse (l. 105)," the poem describes his progress to Newgate. After being

yfetered weel,
bope wiþ yrn ant wyþ steel, (ll. 110-111)

Fraser was sent

to londone wiþ mony armed grom;
he com yn at newegate, y telle yt ou a plyht,
a gerland of leues on ys hed y-dyht
of grene (ll. 114-117).

Fraser's judges, "sire Thomas of Multone," "sire Rauf of sondwych," and "sire Iohan Abel," are identified as "þe iustices seten for þe knyhtes of scotlonde (l. 146)," and their accusation of treason is reported dramatically:

þenne saide þe iustice, þat gentil is ant fre,
'sire simond ffrysel, þe kynges traytour hast þou be,
In water ant in londe, þat monie myhten se.
what sayst þou þareto? hou wolt þou quite þe?
do say!' (ll. 153-157)

To convey the ignominy of Fraser's position the poet gives a minute description of his transportation from the Tower to the gallows:

wiþ feteres & wiþ gyues ichot he wes to-drowe,
ffrom þe tour of londone, þat monie myhte knowe,
In a curtel of burel a selkeþe wyse,
ant a gerland on ys heued of þe newe guyse (ll. 177-180).

The description of Fraser's execution is similar to Wallace's. Like Wallace, Fraser

wes an-honge
al quick byheueded, þah him pohte longe.
seppe he wes y-opened, is boweles ybrend (ll. 185-187).

By indicating to his audience the similarity between the executions, the poet links the two men as enemies of England, a linkage reinforced

when Fraser's head was placed beside Wallace's on the bridge. The poet interprets the mounting of Fraser's head on the bridge as symbolizing the futility of Fraser's efforts in the war and his complete fall from power. Fraser's sightless eyes may peer fruitlessly "after succour of scotlond" and "after help of fraunce" (ll. 203-304). The author of "Simon Fraser" presents Fraser's demise not only as a fall from power but also as a fall from grace. While he constantly terms Simon a traitor, he also asserts that

sum while in ys time he wes a modi knyht
In huerte (ll. 164-165).

From the poet's patriotic viewpoint a man is a courageous knight if he is fighting for England, but a traitor if he is fighting for Scotland or France. Since the king was considered God's representative in the Kingdom of Earth, a knight who served the king was comparable to a knight of Christ. Therefore, Simon Fraser (or any Scotsman or Frenchman) could be a Christian knight only if he served Edward I, the true earthly sovereign. The poet suggests that Fraser's fall from power was accomplished through the sin of treason, without consideration for the inevitable result of defying his king:

ffor al is grete poer, ȝet he was ylaht;
ffalsnesse & swykedom al hit ȝep to naht.
ȝo he wes in scotlond, lutel wes ys ȝoht
of ȝe harde iugement ȝat him wes bysoht
In stounde (ll. 169-173).

The poet indicates that Fraser (and all other traitors) should refrain from meddling in the government of their country. Pointing to Fraser's head mounted on London Bridge, he declares that

betere him were in scotlond
wiȝ is ax in ys hond,
to pleyen o ȝe grene (ll. 206-208).

In these lines Fraser is again represented in the typical English conception of a ravaging, ax-wielding barbarian.

Early in "Simon Fraser" the writer had interrupted his description of Fraser's execution with an account of Robert the Bruce's coronation, which preceded the Battle of Methven, mentioning the arrests of the men who aided the Bruce, primarily the hierarchy of the Scottish Kirk. The poet ranks William Lamberton, Bishop of St. Andrews, Robert Wishart, Bishop of Glasgow, and the Abbot of Scone with the "Bysshopes ant barouns" who

come to þe kynges pes,
ase men þat weren fals, fykel, ant les (ll. 33-34).

In the poem they are denounced as traitors because

þourh consail of þes bisshopes y-nemmed byfore,
sire Robert þe bruyc₃ furst kyng wes y-core (ll. 57-58).

Wishart and Lamberton had urged the people of Scotland to fight for the Bruce as for a righteous, even holy, cause, and at the coronation Wishart absolved Robert of the Red Comyn's murder. This murder is not mentioned in "Simon Fraser," nor in any other poem. It has been suggested that "Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy" anticipated the murder,¹⁰ but the characteristic vagueness of the prophecy inhibits a positive identification. Only one line in "Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy" seems remotely suggestive of the murder: "When mon is leuere opermones þyng þen is owen (l. 2)." The line could be associated with the negotiations between Comyn and the Bruce which ended in Comyn's murder. Robert requested that Comyn meet him in the Church of the Grey friars at Dumfries in the hopes that they might put aside their rivalry and form a

¹⁰Robbins, Notes, p. 260.

coalition for "the revival of Scottish kingship."¹¹ Comyn was allied with the Bruce's long feudal rivals, the Balliols. According to contemporary accounts, Bruce suggested to Comyn that either Comyn support his bid for the throne and receive in return all the Bruce's land in Carrick or that the Bruce would support Comyn. When a heated argument broke out, Bruce "struck at Comyn with his dagger,"¹² and Bruce's cohorts proceeded to move in with their swords, wounding Comyn fatally and leaving him for dead. Robert the Bruce was excommunicated for the murder.

Receiving absolution from Wishart enabled Robert to be crowned, and the Abbot of Scone's support made it possible for the coronation to take place at Scone, the sacred site at which kings of Scotland had been crowned for centuries. Describing the coronation, the author of "Simon Fraser" suggests the hollowness of the crown in the light of Bruce's swift defeat:

hii þat him croumede proude were ant bolde;

 hii setten on ys heued a crowne of rede golde,
 Ant token a kyne-gerde (so me kyng sholde)
 to deme.
 þo he wes set in see,
 lute! god coupe he,
 kyne-riche to 3eme (ll. 65-70).

The poet also emphasizes the futility of the clergy's efforts when describing their capture:

þe bisshop of glascou, ychot he was ylaht,
 þe bisshop of seint Andre, boþe, he þeþ ycaht;
 þe abbot of scon wipþe kyng nis nougt saht;
 al here purpos ycome hit ys to naht,
 þurh ryhte.
 hii were unwis,
 when hii þohte pris
 a3eyn huere kyng to fyhte (ll. 49-56).

¹¹Barrow, p. 206.

¹²Barrow, pp. 206-208.

In alluding to "here purpos" the poet reveals an awareness of the religious issues in the struggle between England and Scotland. A large part of what prompted Wishart to support Robert the Bruce was the bishop's desire to preserve the liberty of the Scottish Kirk; Barrow observes that the oath Robert the Bruce took in the coronation at Scone "may be seen as the oath of one who was soon to be Rex Scottorum to preserve and defend those . . . libertates ecclesie Scoticane."

"Simon Fraser" does not mention any details of the capture of the Scottish clergy, probably because a description of bishops, Scottish or otherwise, being chained in irons would afford little satisfaction to the common Englishman. The capture of these men, which took place before the Battle of Methven, was not attended with the ruthlessness of Fraser's arrest but only because their orders protected them from execution.¹³ They received imprisonment and were stripped of their offices.

The reference in "Simon Fraser" to the Battle of Methven is brief. The poet's intent is to convey the folly of the men who fought for Robert the Bruce. In the battle

hii weren byset on eueruche halue,
 somme slaye were, ant somme dreynte hem-selue.
 sire Iohan of lyndeseye nolde nout abyde,
 he wod into þe water, his feren him bysyde,
 to adrenche.
 whi nolden hii be war?
 þer nis non aþeyn star,
 why nolden hii hem by-þenche? (ll. 97-104)

The Scots were indeed attacked "on eueruche halue." Aymer de Valence struck while the Scottish camp was disorganized, and though they gave fierce battle, the Scots were quickly overcome, the conflict becoming a rout rather than a battle."¹⁴ In "Simon Fraser" the poet asserts

¹³Barrow, p. 216.

¹⁴Barrow, p. 216.

that in despair some of the Scots committed suicide, but this is not true. They were merely trying to escape--John Lindsey certainly did not drown; he lived to become the Bishop of Glasgow in 1323.

Bruce's flight from the battle is referred to cryptically in the poem. The circumstances are not given; the impression conveyed is that the Bruce is still at large, hunted. The poet suggests that while in hiding the Bruce

mai eueruche day ys fon him se byfore;
 3ef hee mowen him hente, ichot he biþ forlore,
 saunt₃ fayle (ll. 59-61).

Again, the poet implies the hollowness of Robert's crown and expresses the hope, which would have been shared by his English audience, that the Bruce will be captured, along with his devoted English supporter, John de Strathbogie, Earl of Atholl:

were sire robert þe bruyc₃ y-come to þis londe,
 ant þe erl of asseles, þat harde is an honde,
 alle þe oper pouraille, forsoþe ich vnderstonde,
 mihten be ful blyþe ant þonke godes sonde
 wyþ ryhte (ll. 217-221).

The Earl of Atholl was indeed captured, though apparently after the poem was written; the author would certainly not overlook the opportunity to describe the execution (which took place in November of 1306) of so important a leader of the Scots, whom the people would regard as even more traitorous than Simon Fraser because of his English birth.

The poet's audience would have received the graphic description of Fraser and Wallace's executions eagerly, and the gloating tone certainly implies no censorship of Edward I's vengeful attitude toward the men who supported the Bruce, nor is there any in the description of Sir Herbert Morham's execution. In depicting this incident the poet supplies fewer details, possibly because Morham's execution was less celebrated than Fraser's or Wallace's. However, the circumstances leading

to his death are described specifically. Sir Herbert was already in the Tower at the time of Fraser's arrest, and while there he had made the imprudent but zealous wager that Fraser would not be captured, laying his head as the stake. His execution and that of his squire, Thomas du Boys, took place on the same day as Fraser's:

sire herbert of Morham, feyr knyht ant bold,
for þe loue of frysel ys lyf wes y-sold;
a waiour he made, so hit wes y-told,
ys heued of to smhyte 3ef me him brohte in hold,
wat so bytyde.
sory was he þenne,
þo he myhte him kenne
þourh þe toun ryde.

þenne seide ys scwyer a word anon ryht,
'sire, we beþ ded, ne helpeþ hit no wyht!'
(Thomas de boys þe scwyer wes to nome)
'Nou ychot oure waiour turneþ ous to grome,
so y bate'
y do ou to wyte,
here heued wes of smyte
byfore þe tour gate (ll 129-144).

The poet's insertion of dialogue dramatizes the incident so as to emphasize the folly of Morham's wager, and Edward's ruthlessness in this murder, that Barrow terms "the most sickening of the many killings ordered by King Edward in 1306,"¹⁵ is totally glossed over.

The poet's omission of the punishment inflicted on the Bruce's sister Mary and his cousin Isabel, Countess of Buchan, is conspicuous, though "Simon Fraser" may have been written before the ladies' capture. These women, the latter having attended Robert's coronation, were put in cages designed specifically for their imprisonment, Mary's hung from the walls of Roxburgh Castle and Isabel's from Berwick; neither of the women was allowed to speak with anyone of Scottish blood. The poet could not have presented such inhuman treatment in any justifiable light.

¹⁵Barrow. p. 218.

The unemotional description of horrors throughout the poem suggest that the poet shared Edward I's attitude of vindictiveness towards the Scots, and Robbins observes that the "hatred of the enemy expressed in this poem foreshadows Minot's venom against the Scots."¹⁶

Minot's "Bannockburn Avenged" refers to the great Scottish victory at Bannockburn in 1314, the last battle of Robert the Bruce's to be treated in these poems. Minot recalls how

Skottes out of berwik and of abirdene,
at þe bannokburn war 3e to kene.
þare slogh 3e many sakles, als it was sene (ll. 1-3).

But with the Scottish defeat at Halidon Hill, 1333, which Minot celebrates in this poem, the Battle of Bannockburn "es wrokin (l. 5)." Besides recalling the great number of English killed at Bannockburn, whose deaths are now revenged, Minot again insinuates that the Scots are a heathen race. His use of the word "kene" plays upon its connotation of savagery. The English losses at Bannockburn are also referred to in "Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy." Foretelling the end of the Scottish-English wars, the poem prophecies a time "When bambourne is donged wyþ dede men (l. 9)." Robbins notes that Murray, who published an edition of the poem, believed the prophecy was "composed on the eve of the Battle of Bannockburn and circulated under Thomas' name in order to discourage the Scots and encourage the English in the battle."¹⁷ Such an interpretation cannot be verified from internal evidence. The line seems actually to refer to the English dead, not the Scottish. The number of Englishmen killed in the battle was considerable, although

¹⁶Barrow, p. 218.

¹⁷Robbins, Notes, p. 253.

it has been impossible to determine the precise number. Among the dead were an unusual number of the aristocrats, notably Lord Robert Clifford, who commanded a cavalry division, and Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, the last male scion of his name. The details that account for the Scots' success are not mentioned in either "Bannockburn Avenged" or "Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy." Robert the Bruce had established a strong position in the New Park, just south of Stirling. The early skirmishes of the battle raised the Scots' morale and filled the English with dismay. Robert the Bruce defeated Henry de Bohun in single combat before the fighting began. In the next engagement the Bruce's nephew, Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray, cut off the attempt by Lord Clifford to reach Stirling by by-passing New Park. And as the massed forces met the second day of the battle, the English were restricted by the marshes and streams, and especially by the Bannock Burn itself.

Minot may have been reluctant to recall the details of the Battle of Bannockburn because the victories in which he found consolation were not equal to the loss at Bannockburn. In his reference to the Battle of Dupplin Moor, 12 August 1332, in "Bannockburn Avenged," Minot asks

Whare er 3e skottes of sain Iohnes toun?
 þe boste of 3owre baner es betin all doune (ll. 7-8).

On the night of the battle, the Scots, having perceived their numerical superiority, spent the night carousing, and Robbins notes that "On the eve of Dupplin Moor, the Scots went to bed singing about the tailed Englishmen."¹⁸ Although they were able to form ranks the following morning when Edward Balliol's army was approaching, the disorganization

¹⁸Robbins, Notes, p. 261.

was a harbinger for the outcome of the battle, as confusion and rivalry broke out among the Scottish leaders.

Minot recalls the defeat at Dupplin Moor again in "Neville's Cross" in which he ascribes the Scots's loss to David the Bruce:

Sir Daudid þe bruse was at a distance,
When Edward be balliolfe rade with his lance;
þe north end of ingland teched him to duance,
when he was met on þe more with mekill mischance (ll. 1-4).

However, David was only twelve years old at the time of the battle, and the Scottish forces were led by the Guardian of the Realm, Donald of Mar. Minot places the burden of defeat on David because in the poem he focuses on David's capture in the later English victory at Neville's Cross.

The Battle of Halidon Hill, 19 July 1333, was the next severe Scottish defeat following Dupplin Moor, and it is also the battle Minot celebrated in "Bannockburn Avenged." The references to the battle are vague. Minot's main interest was to portray the Scottish defeat as a direct consequence of their famous treachery. The only specific incidents Minot mentions are the destruction at Dundee of a fleet sent by Philip VI of France to relieve the besieged Berwick and the capture of the city. Minot gleefully discloses the news that "þi dwelling in donde es done for þi gile (l. 24)." Alluding to Edward III's assuming possession of the city, Minot states that he "had his will at berwick" (l. 35), but there is also a warning that the heathen Scots are not to be trusted: "skottes broght him þe kayes, bot get for þaire gile (l. 36)." Because of "þaire gile" the Scots will have no success agianst the English, despite their earlier victories and their empty boasts: a "skot in his wordes has wind for to spill (l. 33)." Minot even dogs the Scottish in their defeat, suggesting that a Scotsman will find no comfort as he

gase in burghes and beten þe stretes,
 all þise Inglis men harmes he hetes;
 fast makes he his mone to men þat he metes,
 bot fone frendes he findes þat his bale betes (ll. 25-28).

True, the Scottish defeat at Halidon Hill was devastating. Edward Balliol had laid siege to Berwick, and Edward III soon arrived and took command. The Scots under Sir Archibald (the Grim) Douglas attempted to raise the siege, but King Edward already had the advantage of a favorable defensive position on Halidon Hill, and as the battle ensued the Scots were decimated by the English archers raining arrows on their flanks. Most of the Scottish leaders were killed in the battle. However, in his desire to present the Scots as permanently vanquished, Minot, as usual, underestimated them. A strong Scottish resistance took shape in 1334, which culminated in the Battle of Culblean, 30 November 1335. In this battle Sir Andrew Moray marched to relieve Kildrummy Castle, under siege by an adherent of Edward III, David de Strathbogie, and defended by Moray's wife, Christian Bruce, sister of King Robert I. Moray, with the aid of William Douglas, John of the Craig, and the Earl of March, decisively defeated Strathbogie. Ranald Nicholson cites Dr. Douglas Simpson's comment that "Culblean 'was the turning point in the second war of Scottish Independence, and therefore an event of great historical importance,'" ¹⁹ which is a fitting answer to Minot.

Minot had to wait eleven years to celebrate another decisive English victory, the Battle of Neville's Cross, 17 October 1346. In "Neville's Cross" Minot asserts that the battle was urged by Philip VI to divert Edward III's attention from the Siege of Calais. The French king

¹⁹ Ranald Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots: the Formative Years of Military Career, 1327-1335* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 236.

Sent vnto sir dauid and faire gan him pray;
 at ride thurgh ingland paire fo-men to flay,
 and said none es at home to let hym þe way (ll. 15-18).

The idea of an attack was attractive to the Scots quite apart from fulfilling their alliance with France. Minot describes the raid David led into Northumberland, where the Scots

robbed and þai reued and held þat þai hent.
 it was in þe waniand þat þai furth went;
 for couaitise of cataile þo schrewes war schent (ll. 24-26).

As usual Minot employs language that connotes barbarism, and the Scots's defeat at Neville's Cross is presented as punishment for their savage behavior:

Schent war þo schrewes, and ailed vnsele,
 for at þe neuil cros nedes bud þam knele (ll. 27-28).

The important event that occupies most of Minot's treatment of the battle is the capture of David II. The poet gives credit to "þe Erchbisschop of 3ork," William de la Zouche, for his leadership in the battle but places even more emphasis on his spiritual leadership, as well as that of the Bishops of Durham and Carlisle, all of whom

wald neuer blin
 þe wirschip of ingland wiht wappen to win.
 Mekill wirship þai wna, and wele haue þai waken,
 for syr dauid þe Bruse was in þat tyme taken (ll. 31-34).

Minot extends the idea of Christian puissance conquering pagan aggression when he describes David's capture by Sir John Copeland, who

talked to Dauid and kend him his crede,
 þare was sir dauid, ne dughty in his dede,
 þe faire toure of londen haued he to mede (ll. 38-40)...

Minot again shows the emptiness of Scottish boasts when he refers to David's assertion that in this campaign he would see London. Of course, David did see London in his captivity. The poem also refers to the capture of Sir William of Douglas, who had shared command of the second Scottish battalion with the Earl of Moray. Minot states that Douglas

was "brought vnto þe toure (l. 41)." However, Minot omits any mention of the capture of the Scottish earls of Fife, Menteith, Sutherland, and Wigton, nor does he allude to the death of John Randolph, Earl of Moray. None of the details of the fighting are given in "Neville's Cross." As usual, it was the English archers who opened the attack. Their assault of arrows caused disorganization in the Scottish battalions, and the dismounted English men-at-arms completed the victory. But at the end of the poem, instead of recounting the battle as a triumph of English military prowess, Minot presents Neville's Cross as a Scottish defeat brought about by "paire falshede."

The last battle of the Scottish War of Independence that is treated in the Robbins' anthology is the overwhelming Scottish victory in the Battle of Otterburn, 5 August 1388. The ballad "The Battle of Otterburn" begins with a reference to the opening incident of the raid into Northumberland by Robert, Earl of Fife, across Solway Firth:

the yerlle of fyffe, wyth-owghten Stryffe,
he bowynd hym over sulway (ll. 5-6).

After plundering as far south as Cockermouth, the main forces divided their attack, Fife and Archibald (the Grim) Douglas directed towards the West March and James of Douglas with a smaller force towards the East. It was the latter division that met Hotspur in the Battle of Otterburn. The ballad of the same name describes Douglas' route over Ottercop Hill and his raid into Northumberland as far south as Newcastle. Leading his troops "Over hoppertope hyll," Douglas

þoldely brent northomberlond,
and haryed many a towyn, (ll. 9, 13-14)

afterwards marching

to neue castell,
so styll and stalwurthlye (ll. 23-24).

Since the poet's preoccupation is with the legendary single combat between Hotspur and Douglas at the Battle of Otterburn, he places Percy in Newcastle so that the Douglas and Percy may confront one another before the battle and challenge each other to fight at Otterburn. As "Syr henry perssy laye at the new castell (l. 29)," the Douglas approached the stronghold and

The skottes they cryde on hyght,
'Syr hary perssy, and thow byste wyth-in,
come to the fylde and fyght (ll. 34-36).

Actually, Hotspur was not within the castle. He had pursued Fife's and Archibald's forces on the West March, but having realized that he was not strong enough to attack so large a body, he decided to take on the Scottish army on the East March. Here he and the Douglas first engaged in battle in a meeting quite unlike the exchange of amenities dramatized in the poem. In the ballad the two leaders vow to fight the following day at Otterburn:

'there schall I byde the,' sayd the dowglas,
'by the fayth of my bodye.'
'thether schall I com,' sayd syr hary perssy,
'my trowth I plyght to the (ll. 61-64).

The author even describes "a pype of wyne" shared by Percy's and the Douglas' troops, after which

the dowglas turnyd hym home-ward agayne,
for-soth wyth-owghten naye;
he toke hys logeyng at otterborne
upon a wednys-day.

and ther he pyght hys standerd dowyn (ll. 69-73).

The most specific details of the fighting given in the ballad are the names of individuals who fought on each side. Unfortunately, the poet slays a number of Scots who did not actually die in the battle. As the Douglas observes Percy's approach, he calls on his lords to prepare for battle:

'the yerle of mentaye, thow aret my eme,
 the forewarde I gyve to the;
 the yerlle of huntlay, cawte and kene,
 he schall be wyth the.

'the lorde of bowghan in armure bryght
 on the other hand he schall be;
 lorde Ihonstone and lorde maxwell,
 they to schall be wyth me.

'swynton, fayre fylde upon your pryde,
 to batell make yow bowen;
 syr davy skotte, syr water stewarde,
 syr Ihon of agurstone. . . .' (ll. 101-112)

Robbins notes that since there was no earldom of Huntly until 1449, the reference to "the yerlle of huntlay" is an anachronism.²⁰ The reference was also regarded by Thomas Percy as proof that the poem was written after this date.²¹ Of the men Douglas calls to battle, the Earl of Menteith, Maxwell, Scot, Steward, and Haggerston are reported as dead later in the poem. However, Menteith (the Earl of Fife) was not present at the battle, being in command of the main Scottish forces on the West March, and Sir John Maxwell certinaly was not killed; he captured Sir Ralph Percy, for which he was knighted.

The death of James of Douglas is of greatest interest to the poet, since the single combat between Douglas and Percy is the central incident of the ballad. The challenge made at Newcastle is recalled as an English envoy presses Hotspur to wait for the arrival of th Earl of Northumberland, telling Percy that his father

'desyres yow to byde
 that he may see thys fyht.' (ll. 147-148)

But Hotspur insists that he must keep his vow and fight:

²⁰ Robbins, Notes, p. 283.

²¹ Arngart, p. 46.

'my trowth ys plyght to yonne skottyssh knyght,
 it nedes me not to layne,
 that I schulde byde him upon thys brent,
 and I have hys trowth agayne.' (ll. 157-160)

The single combat between the two commanders is heightened by the dialogue, in which Percy insists,

'yet wyll I never yelde me to the,
 Whyll I may stonde and fyght.' (ll. 211-212)

The fight continues, and Douglas and Hotspur

swapped to-gether, whyll that they swette,
 wyth swordes scharpe and long;
 ych on other so faste thee bette,
 tyll ther helmes cam in peyses dowyne.

The perssy was a man of strength,
 I tell yow in thys stounde;
 He smote the dowglas at the swordes length
 that he fell to the growynde (ll. 213-220).

There is no historical evidence that Percy and Douglas actually engaged in single combat in the Battle of Otterburn. Shakespeare incorporated this incident into I Henry IV. In Act V, scene iv, Henry IV and the Douglas engaged in single combat during the Battle of Shrewsbury, but in Shakespeare's play Prince Hal steps in, fights with the Douglas, and sends him fleeing.

Douglas' body was found in the morning of 6 August, the battle having lasted throughout the night. The circumstances of Percy's capture are also uncertain. The ballad includes very few details of the capture, stating merely that in the battle

the dowglas lost hys lyffe,
 and the perssy was lede awaye (ll. 271-272).

There is, however, a reference to "syr hewe [John] Montgomery," who, according to the poem, "borrowed the perssy home agayn (l. 276)."

While the English version of the ballad suggests that Montgomery was exchanged for Percy, the Scottish version and the Scottish chronicles

credit him with capturing Hotspur.²² An English ballad-maker would be less interested in giving a dramatic account of Percy's capture than would a Scot. For the former the incident is lamentable; therefore, it is not surprising that the author of "The Battle of Otterburn" refers more specifically to Percy's return than to his capture.

"The Battle of Otterburn" is notable for its technique of referring to lords by the armorial animals and other figures on their standards, a device that became popular in poetry on the Wars of the Roses. In this ballad the author uses the arms of Douglas and Percy to describe the fighting between the Scots and the English:

the blodye harte in the dowglas armes
hys standerde stode on hye;
that every man myght full well knowe,
by-syde stode starres thre.

the whyte lyon on the ynglysshe perte,
forsoth as I yow sayne,
the lucetts and the cressawntts both,
the skotts fowght them agayne (ll. 177-184).

The author also anticipates the technique of punning on the standards as he describes the blow that killed the Douglas:

the sworde was scharpe and sore can byte,
I tell yow in sertayne,
to the harte he cowde hym smyte,
thus was the dowglas slayne (ll. 221-224).

In their treatment of the events of the Scottish War of Independence Laurence Minot and the other English minstrels perpetuated a view of the Scots as lawless barbarians who were in defiance of their overlord, The King of England. Actually, the people of Scotland were guided by a spirit of nationalism that was probably even stronger than that of

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Ranald Nicholson, Scotland: The Later Middle Ages, Vol. III of The Edinburgh History of Scotland (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974), p. 199.

the patriotic Minot. They saw their king as "the representative of an ancient line, the head of the greatest kindred of all."²³ And in the end their struggle was, as Laurence Minot would say "wele wurth þe while."

²³William Ferguson, Scotland's Relations with England: A Survey to 1707 (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1977), p. 20.

CHAPTER II

THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR

For three generations the usurping Lancastrians had ruled England: Richard of Bordeaux's Henry unhappily but with fair efficiency, Shakespeare's Prince Hal with Agincourt for glory and the stake for zeal, and his son in half-witted muddle and failure. It was no wonder if men hankered after the legitimate line again, as they watched poor Henry's inept friends frittering away the victories in France. . . .

Josephine Tey
The Daughter of Time

In Robbins' anthology there are sixteen poems that deal either in whole or in part with incidents of the Hundred Years War. Laurence Minot's "Calais, 1347" is a war poem composed of twelve eight-line stanzas which bears the mark of a professional minstrel. Minot bids his audience (mainly soldiers who engaged in the siege) to

Lystens now, and 3e may lere,
als men þe suth may vnderstand (ll. 57-58).

Another of Minot's poems about the Hundred Years War, "The Taking of Guines," 1352, also contains characteristics of the work of a minstrel. Minot promises his audience that "Of Gynes ful gladly now will I bigin (l. 7)."

The anonymous author of "God Save Henry V," 1413, speaks with the voice of the commons, who "mayntene lordis honour (l. 141)," and he offers advice to the newly-crowned king and the lords of the realm. Each of the nineteen eight-line stanzas ends with an admonition, with variations, to "saue þe kyng, & kepe þe crowne."

"Defend Us From Lollardry" is similar in structure to "God Save Henry V," having nineteen stanzas of eight lines. The anonymous

author's concern about the spread of lollardry suggests that he may have been a cleric, and his intended audience is the members of the clergy and King Henry V, whom he urges to suppress lollardry. Robbins identifies this poem as "the only ME poem dealing exclusively with the Lollards."¹

Thomas Hoccleve's "Richard II Interred," 1413, is a commemorative poem but also a poem of praise for Henry V. Hoccleve was a clerk in the office of the Privy Seal, and he frequently sought royal patronage through his verse; therefore, the intended audience for this poem was probably King Henry himself.

"The Crowned King," 1415 is a long poem of 144 lines that offers advice to King Henry V. Robbins notes the poem's similarity to Piers Plowman in its framework, that of a dream vision.² The author identifies himself as a clerk, and the advice he offers is the viewpoint of a member of the commons.

C. L. Kingsford describes the anonymous "Battle of Agincourt," 1415, as "the best and most spirited of the Agincourt poems."³ The ballad was incorporated in a chronicle, but sixty-four lines were preserved in verse form. The author attempts to arouse patriotic enthusiasm in his audience, and he was probably successful; Kingsford feels that the poem "gives the impression of being more genuinely popular than other accounts of the battle."⁴

¹Robbins, Notes, p. 332.

²Robbins, Notes, p. 386.

³Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century (1913; rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, n.d.), p. 240.

⁴Kingsford, p. 240.

The anonymous "Agincourt Carol," 1415, is a celebratory poem intended to be accompanied by music; each of the six four-line stanzas ends with the refrain "Deo gracias." Robbins quotes Greene's comment in Early English Carols that the poem is "'probably the work of a cleric rather than a minstrel.'"⁵

"The Rose on the Branch" is an anonymous eight-line song that employs the traditional symbol of the rose in a figurative celebration of the Battle of Agincourt. Since the rose was such a popular symbol, a wide audience would have responded to this song.

John Audelay's "Recollection of Henry V," 1429, is a retrospective, commemorative poem of sixteen four-line stanzas. Robbins identifies Audelay as "a chantry priest who ended his days upon a corrody at Hagmond Abbey, near Shrewsbury."⁶ The poet directs his praise of Henry V to a general audience to encourage support for Henry's son Henry VI.

The theme of the wheel of fortune dominates John Lydgate's "Sudden Fall." Lydgate precedes the poem with an explanation of his purpose:

Here folowen seven balades made by daun Iohn Lydegate of þe
sodeine fal of certain Princes of Fraunce and Englaunde nowe
late in oure dayes.

The poem is composed of seven seven-line stanzas, each devoted to the effect of fate on a powerful individual.

The anonymous "Scorn of Burgundy," 1436, is a long patriotic ballad that vents personal abuse upon Philip, Duke of Burgundy. Each stanza repeats, with variations, the assertion that "Thy falsnes is begynnyng of al thy myschance."

⁵Robbins, Notes, p. 297.

⁶Robbins, Introduction, p. xxxv.

"Follies of Burgundy," 1419, must not be confused with the previous poem. The anonymous author of "Follies of Burgundy" styles the poem "A remembraunce of LII folyes" of John, Duke of Burgundy, Philip's father. This poem is also one of personal abuse, and both poems on the Dukes of Burgundy were written for a general audience, aware of recent Anglo-Burgundian relations.

The anonymous ballad "Calais, 1436" effectively employs narrative details to provide a wide audience with an exhilarated account of the Siege of Calais in 1436. This poem is composed of twenty-eight six-line stanzas that have a very regular stanza form.

"Mockery of the Flemings," 1436, is an anonymous ballad of sixty-six lines with irregular stanza length. The author directs his account of the siege of Calais to a general audience who would have relished the minute details he gives.

Three figures emerge as important in these poems about the Hundred Year War: Edward III, Henry V, and Philip, Duke of Burgundy. The details in poems depicting events in the careers of these men strictly maintain the English point of view, emphasizing the prowess of Edward and Henry but never the difficult conditions of their campaigns or their ruthlessness, particularly Edward's. On the other hand, Burgundy's perfidy is consistently depicted, but no poet mentions his shrewdness.

Edward III's siege of Calais, 1346-47, is the first incident of the Hundred Years War that appears in the fourteenth century poems. Minot's "Calais, 1346" takes up Edward's campaign that had begun with the invasion of Normandy, 12 July 1346. The poem focuses on Edward's right to take the city, King Philip VI and the Dauphin's reluctance to give battle, and the surrender of the city. To augment his audience's hostile feelings towards the French, Minot harks back to the raids that

French privateers made upon the English coast earlier, such as the plundering of Portsmouth and Southampton in 1338. (These deeds had, of course, been avenged by a strong English naval victory at Sluys in Flanders in the summer of 1340). He describes the French raids as their "misdede" and opens his attack by suggesting that because of the Frenchmen's acts against the English, all their joy on earth is gone forever, for

sir Edward sall ken 3ow 3owre crede.
whilum wan 3e wight in wede,
to robbing rathly for to ren,
mend 3ow sone of 3owre misdede (ll. 4-7).

When describing the French, Minot uses terms suggesting savagery, similar to those he used to depict the Scots;

Kend it es how 3e war kene
al inglishmen with dole to dere;
paire gudes toke 3e al bidene,
no man born wald 3e forbere.
3e spared noght with swerd ne spere
to stik pam and paire gudes to stele.
with wapin and with ded of were
pus haue 3e wonnen werldes wele (ll. 9-16).

Besides pointing to the savage raids by the French, Minot offers further justification for Edward's siege by echoing Edward's own claim to the throne of France, the title he used early in the Hundred Years War as provocation for his aggression and which he dropped and resumed whenever expedient during the War. He was using this title at the time of the siege, even declining to consider any treaty which lacked provision for the title. Therefore, according to Minot, any French resistance to Edward is resistance to the true sovereign, and he condemns the French for trying to deprive Edward

of his right,
and do him treson with paire tales (ll. 37-38).

Edward began the siege, which lasted nearly a year, on 4 September 1346. Minot depicts the men of Calais as helpless against Edward, who lay just beyond their walls:

Biside 3ow here þe bare bigins
to big his boure in winter tyde (ll. 25-26).

Since Minot's intent is to glorify the English campaign, he deliberately ignores the harsh conditions of the English encampment that winter. Instead, his language suggests that Edward was engaged in a somnolent sojourn, awaiting the spring when the inhabitants of Calais would issue forth and hand him the keys to the city. During that winter Edward was plagued with (understandable) desertions, and by the end he was "in a furious mood" over the time and expense that the siege had cost him.⁷ The siege was so prolonged because the city's walls were proof against the type of weaponry available at the time, so the tactic of starvation had to be implemented by blockading the harbor. Though Minot does not mention the blockade, he graphically reveals its results in his description of the surrender. The burgesses who issue from the city tell Edward,

oure horses, þat were faire and fat,
er etin vp ilkone bidene;
haue we nowþer conig ne cat,
þat þai ne er etin, and hundes kene.
all er etin vp ful clene (ll. 73-77).

Although Minot reveals Edward's severe tactics, he offers no censure of the method.

Minot places his scorn for the French King Philip VI's failure to relieve the city in the mouths of the burgesses, presenting them as prepared to throw off their allegiance to the French king since he is to blame for their plight; they tell Edward that Philip VI

'has left vs ligand in þe mire,
and broght vs till þis doleful dance.' (ll. 71-72)

⁷ Barbara W. Tuchman, A Distant Mirror: the Calamitous Fourteenth Century (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), p. 91.

Philip did not arrive until the end of July 1347, when the siege was nearly over, and he decamped on 2 August. During the interval he attempted to negotiate with Edward through two cardinals, whom Robbins identifies as Annibale Ceccano, Bishop of Frascati, and Etienne Aubert, who later became Pope Innocent VI.⁸ Describing these unsuccessful conferences, Minot uses language that insinuates treachery rather than conciliation on the part of the cardinals:

þai toke þaire counsail in þat stede,
how þai might sir Edward bigile (ll. 43-44).

The poem does not allude to Philip's second attempt to negotiate with Edward. On 31 July a challenge to engage in a pitched battle on mutually agreed ground was presented to Edward by a French envoy, but this attempt also failed. Minot is content to assert that having arrived to relieve the siege "all to late," Philip "fled and faght noght in þat place" (ll. 91, 48).

After the French King's departure, the Governor of Calais, Jean de Vienne, surrendered to Edward on 4 August 1347. Minot refers to the six high-ranking burgesses who placed themselves, by Edward's order, in the King's hands in lieu of the lives of the citizens of Calais:

þe nobill burgase and þe best
come vnto him to haue þaire hire;
þe comun puple war ful prest
rapes to bring about þaire swire (ll. 65-68).

The ropes or halters round the necks of the burgesses were meant "to signify the victor's right to hang them at will."⁹ Curiously, Minot

⁸ Robbins, Notes, p. 267.

⁹ Tuchman, p. 91.

does not mention Queen Philippa's pious intervention that stayed Edward's hand from executing the burgesses. Perhaps Minot did not wish to suggest that "sir Edward" had any such ruthless desire. Instead, Minot focuses on their submission to Edward, and he uses the formal ceremony of surrender to suggest to his audience that the men of Calais were willing to accept Edward as their king. The knights of the city approach Edward, bidding him,

'do now, lord, bi law of land
þi will with vs for euermare.' (ll. 63-64)

Concluding with Jean de Vienne's surrender of the keys of the city, Minot expresses the hope, shared by the common people, that Calais will remain in English hands and that Edward will retain the keys:

þe kaies er 3olden him of þe 3ate,
lat him now kepe þam if he kun. (ll. 89-90).

Minot's "The Taking of Guines" describes an attempt made to wrest those keys from Edward two years later. Geoffrey de Charny, the Governor of St. Omer, by bribing "an Italian to whom Edward had entrusted the command of the garrison,"¹⁰ planned to re-take the city. However, Edward, having discovered the plan, was lying in wait for de Charny and his men within Calais. As soon as de Charny and his troops were admitted into the fortress, Edward and his soldiers surrounded them and placed them under arrest. Minot suggests to his audience that the conspirators were too incompetent to execute the capture of the fortress:

3e men of Saint Omers, trus 3e þis tide,
and puttes out 3owre paviliowned with 3owre 3owre mekill pride.
sendes efter sir iohn of fraunce to stand by 3owre syde;
a bore es boun 3ow to biker, þat wele dar habyde (ll. 31-34).

Minot's chief interest, though, is the victory from which the poem derives

¹⁰W. Warberton, Edward III, 7th ed., Epochs of Modern History
(New York: Longmans, Green, 1897), p. 133.

its name, and in describing the capture of Guines he praises John of Doncaster, who led the assault, for his bravery and boldness in the

ful balde dede,
when he come toward Gines to ken þam þaire Crede;
he stirt vnto þe castell with-owten any stede,
of folk þat he fand þare haued he no drede (ll. 13-16).

Minot uses the word "Gentil" to describe Doncaster so that his audience will see the soldier as being more noble and well-born than he actually was; he was really an archer-turned-adventurer. Minot mentions details of the Englishmen's entrance into the city by means of

A letherin ledderr, and a lang line
a small bote. . . . (ll. 19-20)

Minot was probably aware that John of Doncaster had been imprisoned in Guines and used his knowledge of the fortress to lead the English into it. However, Minot ignores the aftermath of the capture of Guines: Doncaster's selling the fortress to Edward. The bargaining has usually been regarded as vulgarly mercenary, but Tout views the selling as a way for King Edward to hold the town without appearing to formally break the truce that had been established after the capture of Calais.¹¹

No other English victories are treated in the poetry until the Battle of Agincourt, 1415. Though Henry V's victory in this battle is the event of his reign that the poets celebrate most, the first two years of his reign also provoke interest. "God Save Henry V," 1413, celebrates Hal's accession to the throne. The anonymous writer's concern is with domestic peace, and he invokes God's blessing on the realm, alluding to the season of the Church at which time the coronation took place. He asks that in "þes holy tyme, let sorwe ases" (l. 4). Henry's coronation

¹¹

Tout, T. F., The History of England from the Accession of Henry III to the Death of Edward III, 1216-1377, Vol III of The Political History of England (1905; rpt. New York: Kraus Rpt., 1968), p. 384.

took place on 9 April 1413, during the Easter period. The poet's concern for peace and stability is evident as he surveys the causes of possible strife within the realm, mostly in the activities of the lollards. Just before Henry V's accession handbills had been circulated by a yeoman named John Whitelock, proclaiming that Richard, the lawful King, was still alive, and one of these appeared on the abbey doors at Westminster during the session of Henry V's first Parliament. Urging the maintenance of internal peace, the author of "God Save Henry V" calls upon

eche man . . .
To letten fooles of here res (ll. 6-7).

The poet was undoubtedly aware that these "fooles" were lollards. He concerns himself with the need of

Lordis, comouns, & clergie
To ben all at on assent, (ll. 11-12)

and he sees the lollards as scattering the stones of the crown through their dissension. However, his immediate concern seems to be with the most important lollard of the time, Sir John Oldcastle, and with the possibility that he might sway the King into leniency:

A man myȝte be forborn
ffer fro a kynges place;
Wolde make a kyng to be forsworn
To lette þe lawe it most not passe.
And make hym wene þat he grace,
And holy in condicioun,
And mayntene hym in his trespace,
While he pykep þe stones out of þe crowne (ll. 57-64).

The poet's general audience, particularly the citizens of London, would have been aware of the King's friendship with Oldcastle, and many would have shared the poet's fear. The case of Sir John Oldcastle is also treated in a poem devoted to criticizing the lollards, "Defend Us From Lollardry." The anonymous writer first criticizes the beliefs of the lollards, in whose creed

þe bibell is al myswent,
 To iangle of Iob or Ieremye,
 þat construen hit after her entent
 for lewde lust of lollardie (ll. 21-24).

Then the poet's criticism becomes centered on Oldcastle in a blatant and extended play on words with the heretic's name:

An old castel, & not repaired,
 With wast walles & woves wide,
 þe wages ben ful yeul wared
 With suich a capitayn to abide;
 þat rereth riot for to ride
 Agayns þe kynge & his clergie,
 With priue payne & pore pride;
 Per is a poynt of lellardie (ll. 33-40).

Although the poet's references to Oldcastle are vague, he may be alluding to Oldcastle's escape from the Tower in the twelfth stanza because he asserts that since the heretic is not in a state of grace, he may not

lepe at large,
 but heuely his hede to hide.
 Where shuld he oper route or ride
 agayns þe chief of chiualrie,
 Not hardi in no place to abide (ll. 91-95).

In was the discovery that Oldcastle was the owner of heretical books that had brought about his first arrest and interrogation in May of 1413. Not immediately convicted, Oldcastle retired to Cooling, his castle in Kent, and he was excommunicated and then arrested and imprisoned in the Tower. His questioning took place on 23 and 25 September 1413, and on the second day he received his condemnation by the Ecclesiastical Court. His escape from the Tower took place on 19 October 1413. Popular belief has suggested that his flight in October was aided by orders from Henry V to relax the guard, but Henry's leniency toward Oldcastle is often exaggerated, and it is very possible that he never justified the fears of the authors of "Defend Us from Lollardry" and "God Save Henry V" by aiding Oldcastle's escape.

Hoccleve's "Richard II Interred" does not openly allude to Old-castle, but the poet does praise Henry for combatting the lollards. He stresses to his audience the widespread influence of lollardry by using "we" to denote the entire country's susceptibility to lollardry, and he bewails the fact that

The feend hath maad vs dronke of the poisoun
of heresie, & lad vs a wrong weye,
þat torne shal to our confusioun
But if þat left be this abusioun (ll. 10-13).

Yet Hoccleve gives thanks for the King's stand against lollardry:

God thanke, & for thy cristen Prince preye,
Syn he fo is to this Rebellioun.
He, of thy soules helthe, is lok and keye" (ll. 22-24)

It is only in the last two stanzas of the poem that Hoccleve moves to the event that he is commemorating, Henry's act of removing King Richard's body from Langley to a more stately interment at Westminster Abbey. Hoccleve praises Henry's charity and his "loueyng herte" that prompted him to honor Richard, but the poem gives no details of the ceremony with which Richard was interred, only observing

With what honour he broght is to this toun,
And with his queene at Westmynstre in th'abbeye
Solempnely in Toumbe leid adoun (ll. 38-40).

The tomb, where Queen Anne lay buried, had been expressly designed by Richard, with effigies of himself and the Queen.

However, generous, conciliating gestures pale beside Henry's deeds of military prowess, especially in the eyes of the poets and thier audiences who revelled in thrilling victories against England's enemies. The mundane preparations for Henry's first invasion of France are touched upon in only one poem. The clerk in "The Crowned King" tells his audience that he is about to present "suche sondry signes" that came to him "In dremyng, in drecchyng, & in derk svevenes" (ll. 5-6). In his dream he perceives a king (Henry), who

of his comunes axe
 A soleyne subsidie to susteyne his weres,
 To be rered in the reaume, as reson requyred (ll. 35-37).

In amassing funding for his war, Henry was granted revenue that was derived from taxes "of two-fifteenths and two tenths of all movable property of all subjects . . . to be levied in the accustomed manner--the fifteenths to be paid by the counties and the tenths by the towns."¹²

However, the author of the poem is less concerned with the details of Henry's preparations for war than with advising the King to appreciate the "loue of thi liegmen," that

may the more availl in a myle-wey
 Thanne moche of thy mukke þan manhode louieþ neuere (ll. 61, 63-64).

Although the advice is directed to the King, the poem is intended for a wide audience who would have shared the poet's ideas about the importance of the common people.

In "A Recollection of Henry V" John Audelay alludes to an incident preceding Henry's departure from France that may not be historically accurate but which would definitely appeal to the English people, especially those connected with the Court. After referring to the Dauphin's first refusal of Henry's offer for Katherine of France, Audelay briefly recounts the story that the Dauphin sent tennis balls to Henry, indicating that the young King would be more successful in an innocuous sport than in a grim war. But Audelay takes the idea that the Dauphin "send him ballis, him with to play" and uses the incident figuratively as he describes Henry's first major engagement in the invasion, the Siege of Harfleur:

þen was he wyse in wars with-all,
 & ta₃t franchemen to plai at þe ball;
 With tenes hold he ferd ham hall;

¹²R. B. Mowat, Henry V (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), p. 111.

To harglete a sege he layd anon
 & cast a bal vn-to þe towne (ll. 12-18).

"tennis balls" became deadly weapons, just as the King becomes a fell adversary to the French; this blow to the Frenchmen's pride would have delighted the English. Audelay suggests that the men of Harfleur were powerless against Henry's force, the Frenchmen swearing

be se & sun
 Hit was þe fynd þat mad þat fray (ll. 19-20)

Naturally Harfleur was not effortlessly swept away by Henry's army. Neither Audelay nor the anonymous author of "The Agincourt Carol" gives the grim details of the siege. Celebrating Henry's victory at Agincourt, the author of the carol sings that Harry laid siege

To harflu tovne with ryal a-ray;
 þat tovne he wan & made a-fray,
 þat fraunce shal rywe tyl domesday (ll. 6-8).

During the five weeks that Henry was encamped beyond the walls of Harfleur, his army was low in rations and plagued by dysentery. After weeks of daily bombardment by English guns, the defenses of the town were so damaged, its citizens so starved and ill with supplies cut off, that the leaders of the city negotiated with Henry on 18 September 1415 and agreed to surrender on 22 September if the Dauphin had not yet come to relieve the city. The English poets avoid mentioning Harfleur's valiant resistance and the frequent assaults by the French men-at-arms from within the city because neither the poets nor their audiences would wish to credit the French with so much spirit. The poets also ignore Henry's clemency in not sacking the city, having no desire to suggest that the King could be gentle or compassionate in war.

The author of "The Agincourt Carol" alludes to the march from Harfleur to Agincourt, the author of the carol sings that Harry laid siege

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The author of "The Agincourt Carol" alludes to the march from Harfleur to Agincourt:

Than went our kynge with alle his oste
 Thorwe fraunce, for alle þe frenshe boste,
 he spared no drede of lest ne moste,
 Tyl he come to agincourt coste (ll. 9-12).

The poet's terms for the obstacles Henry faced during the march suggest that Henry masterfully swept his way through France; he gives no suggestion that the English were reduced to sustaining themselves on walnuts and bits of dried meat. Nor was Henry's march totally unchallenged. While brief skirmishes had occurred at Fecamp and at Montvilliers, the fortresses of Arques and Eu opened fire but were threatened into allowing the English to pass and even giving the troops bread and wine. The crossing of the Somme, though a physical obstacle, was even more a goal, for it was just after crossing the river that Edward III had won the celebrated victory at Crecy. The crossing Edward had discovered at the Blanche-taque was too well-guarded for Henry to attempt, and he

eventually found fords at Bethencourt and at Voyennes and crossed on 19 October, six days before the battle.

The Battle of Agincourt is discussed in detail in the ballad of the same name, while "The Agincourt Carol" and "A Recollection of Henry V" refer to the battle briefly. Audelay is content to state that

at þat patayle,
þe floure of frawnce he fel þat day (ll. 23-24).

Likewise, the author of "The Rose on the Branch," representing England as "the fairest flour," refers figuratively to the battle, in which

Many a knyghte with spere & launce
ffelowade þat rose to his plesance;
When þe rose by-tyde a chaunce,
þan ffadide alle þe floures of fraunce
And chaungyde hewe (ll. 13-17).

"The Agincourt Carol" gives more details of the battle, the author revelling in the slaying and capture of a considerable number of the French nobility:

There dukys & erlys, lorde & barone,
were take & slayne, & pat wel sone;
And summe were ladde in-to lundone,
With ioye and merthe & grete renone (ll. 17-20).

Relating details of the battle, the author of "The battle of Agincourt" focuses on the valorous deeds of individual Englishmen, gratifying the common people's love of honoring their heroes. And like the author of "The Agincourt Carol" the poet also rejoices in the capture of French nobles. In the lines that were paraphrased as prose the date of the battle is given as "þe ffryday tofore þe day of symond and Iude" (l. b), 25 October 1415, the feast of St. Crispin. The poet typically exaggerates the number of the French forces as sixty thousand, thus increasing the odds against which Henry won the battle; however, while accounts vary, the lowest number of Frenchmen has been set at twenty

thousand.¹³ The English army numbered between five and six thousand. The opening lines of the ballad also include an exhortation by Henry, in which he asserts that "as I am trew kynge & knyght, for me þis day schall neuer Ingland rawnsome pay" (ll. o-q). Henry did, in fact, assure his army that he would either emerge victorious from the battle or die on the field.

Though the English were considerably outnumbered, their position was more favorable than that of the French. The latter were constricted by the woods of Tramecourt and by those surrounding Agincourt, a position which "denied ther army any of the freedom of movement that was essential to the successful deployment of so large a number of men."¹⁴ While "The Battle of Agincourt" does not establish the exact position of the two armies, it does allude to the fact that they faced each other for a period of about four hours, neither side willing to begin the attack. In the ballad, the King states that the French "wil nat come to vs" and gives orders to "avant baneres" (ll. m-n). Having decided to take the initiative, Henry ordered Thomas Erpingham to give the signal for the archers to prepare. As usual the archers opened the battle with a volley of arrow, and as the horses of the French men-at-arms fell, hand-to-hand combat ensued. The first lines of the ballad that are in the form of verse describe this opening attack:

Stedes þer stumbelyd in þat stownde,
 þat stod stere stuffed vnder stele;
 With gronyng grete þei felle to grownde,
 Here sydes fecered whan þei gone fele (ll. 1-4).

¹³C. Oman, The History of England from the Accession of Richard II to the Death of Richard III, 1377-1485, Vol. IV of The Political History of England (1906; rpt. New York: Kraus Rpt., 1969), p. 254.

¹⁴Christopher Hibbert, Agincourt (Philadelphia: Dufour Editions, 1964), p. 106.

The poet devotes the remaining seven stanzas to descriptions of the prowess of Henry and his nobles. The King's treacherous brother, Humphrey of Gloucester, is praised by the poet' possibly the fact that the Duke was injured leads the poet to observe that in

at tyde
Manfully, with his mayne,
Wondes he wrought þer wondere wyde (ll. 9-11).

Surprisingly, though, the poet does not mention the fact that the King bravely protected his wounded brother until Humphrey could be taken to safety, at which time the King engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the Duke of Alençon, who struck off Henry's helm but was killed by the King's retainers.

The roles of the Earls of Huntingdon and Oxford are also celebrated. Oxford led, with Edward, Duke of York, the rearguard, while John Holland, Earl of Huntingdon, had been with the main body commanded by the King when the army left Harfleur. The author of the ballad focuses on the number of Frenchmen the earls killed and uses language that suggests the vigor of the Englishmen's attack and their great strength against the armored French:

Hontyngdon & Oxford bothe
Were wondere fers all in þat fyght;
That ersete was glade þai made ful wrothe,
Thorow hem many on-to deth were dyght,
The Erles fowghten with mayn & myȝt,
Rich havberke thei rofe & rente (ll. 17-22).

The prowess of Sir William Brewser, "listed among the nobles of England with the King, in the Harley roll,"¹⁵ is compared to that of a

fofle in fright,
Preste he þer was vpon his pray (ll. 33-34).

The poem also commemorates those English leaders who were killed in the battle. Edward, Duke of York, who had betrayed the King several

¹⁵ Robbins, Notes, p. 288.

times when Henry was Prince of Wales, was killed. However, York's valor in the battle leads the poet to emphasize the Duke's present loyalty to Henry, asserting that

ffro his kyng no fote wold he flee,
Til his basonet to his brayn was bent (ll. 13-14).

Michael de la Pole, the young Earl of Suffolk whose father had been killed at Harfleur also died at Agincourt, and the poet links Suffolk's death with that of Sir Richard Kyghley, their lives

losten in þat bataile,
With dyntes sore þer were their dede (ll. 27-28).

The English losses were relatively small: "The highest estimates put them at no more than five hundred in all, and more reliable ones at one hundred; and most of these were wounded."¹⁶ In contrast, the French suffered enormous losses, particularly among the nobility. The author of "Battle of Agincourt" identifies some of the distinguished men of France who died or were captured at Agincourt. He lists the Dukes

of Orliawnce & of borbon;
The Ewe, & Arhowre,
The Erle of vendon, & many one (ll. 51-53).

The deaths of Orleans, Bourbon, and the Count of Eu and of Vendome were certainly devastating to the French, but the poet omits the names of the equally important Anthony of Brabant, Edward, Duke of Bar, and the Duke of Alençon. He gives the total number of Frenchmen killed as ten thousand, a fairly accurate sum. The poem ends on a note that is, for the twentieth century reader, almost humorous. After describing the great deeds and the honorable deaths of Henry's knights, the poet devotes the final stanza to a typical English condemnation of the Flemings for their

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Hibbert, p. 133.

participation on the French side, in spite of their Duke's agreement to abstain from joining the battle at least not on the side of the French:

þe fals flemynges, . . .

 ffor alle here fals flaterynge fare,
 Aȝenst owre kyng þat day þai stode.
 Bot many of hem her hert-blode
 Vnblythly bledden vpon þat bent;
 ȝit schall þai neuer wayt Inglond good,
 I swere, by god omnipotent (ll. 57-64).

Because of their intense hatred of the Flemings, the English audience would have appreciated these lines.

Henry's triumphant return to London is the occasion for "The Agincourt Carol," though the author gives no detailed description of Henry's progress through the streets of London. Robbins takes the refrain of Deo gracias to be in accordance with Henry's express desire that the victory be attributed only to God.¹⁷ But in spite of their love of pomp, the people would have approved of this tribute, since the King is God's knight. The most militant battle poetry usually expresses thanks to God and asks His blessing on the King.

Poems treating incidents of the Hundred Years War following the Battle of Agincourt deal less with the power of English armies than with their convictions about the perfidy of their allies on the continent, especially the Duchy of Burgundy. John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, with whom Henry V had negotiated before the Battle of Agincourt and again in 1417, had murdered his cousin Louis, Duke of Orleans, in November of 1407, after years of intense and violent rivalry for supremacy in the government of France. Louis "was lured into an ambush in the rue

¹⁷ Robbins, Notes, p. 297.

Vieille-du-Temple, where ruffians hired by Burgundy butchered him and his small escort.¹⁸ This assassination is treated in English poetry not only as an act of infamy but also as the pivotal even that led to John's own murder by the Dauphin, the future Charles VII, in 1419. In "Sudden Fall" Lydgate's treatment of Burgundy follows the medieval concept of the Wheel of Fortune. It is fate that

gan his prosperite to loope,
And made him putte his lyff in suche balaunce (ll. 38-39).

But Lydgate also suggest that Burgundy's death is retribution for the assassination of Louis: "for his mourder he morthered was and slayne" (l. 41). The anonymous "Follies of Burgundy" is a more extensive criticism of the Duke than that given by Lydgate. John's death is presented as retribution for Louis' murder but also as a consequence of his folly in listening to the counsel of those who urged him to negotiate with Charles and ignoring the advice of men who would have guided him prudently. John had arranged to negotiate with the Dauphin in the hopes of an agreement in which he and Charles would stand together against the Armagnacs, the Orleans faction. A meeting place was appointed at The bridge of Montereau, and the conference took place on the night of 10 September 1419. As the argument became increasingly intense, Charles' men stabbed Burgundy to death.¹⁹ The author of "Follies of Burgundy" is scornful of John for agreeing to meet with the Dauphin,

To triste in trete to his fo
Pat hap begyled he ofte & long (ll. 17-18).

John of Burgundy had been warned against the treachery of the men surrounding

¹⁸ Edouard Perroy, The Hundred Years War, trans, W. B. Wells (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951). pp. 226-227.

¹⁹ Perroy, p. 242.

the Dauphin and in the poem he is condemned for not heeding the advice of those who "telleþ where peryle lys!" (l. 75), and for listening to "glosers charmes (l. 51)." By ascribing Burgundy's fall partially to the influence of corrupt counsellors, the poet seizes on an explanation that his general audience would have agreed with; the common people of England were constantly concerned with the influence of corrupt ministers on the government of England, so they too would have condemned Burgundy for heeding such advice. The poet also recalls John's base murder of Louis, and he criticizes him for having loudly justified his deed and for going unrepentant and unpunished. He describes John as a man who

Of mannys dep haue no rouþe,
But hate hem þat tellen hym trouþe;
Loue hym þat cherische hym in synne (ll. 37-39).

A later poet recalls John's misdeeds in the ballad "Scorn of Burgundy," in which the author calls upon Philip, John's son and successor, to remember his father's fate and to take warning, lest he go the same way through his own treachery:

Whan that thy fader thurgh conspired treson,
By assent of Charles that calleth hymself kyng
Of the reame of france, withoute grovnde of reson,
Was a Motreux brought to his confusion (ll. 18-21).

The poet seems to delight in the opportunity to undermine Charles VII's sovereignty and to assert slyly the English claim to the crown. He then reminds Philip that it was after his father's death that he allied himself with Henry, and the repudiation of that bond is held as the cause of Philip's failure in his attempt to seize Calais in 1436. Once he had entered into a formal agreement with Henry,

Of lyf and land he was thy proteccion,
Wherefore thyn ovne falsnesse causeth thy muschance (ll. 23-24).

The first alliance was made during the winter of 1419, and the formal treaty was sealed on 25 December of that year. The poet also refers to a later agreement, the Treaty of Troyes, finalized on 21 May 1420, which he suggest Burgundy has violated. The writer of the ballad emphasizes Philip's free will in allying himself with Henry and the sacrilegious breaking of this treaty:

Remembre the, Phelippe, what tyme and how
 To kyng henry the fft by thyn ovne assent,
 Withoute his desire, thou madest a solempne vow,
 Vsing goddes body the holy sacrement,
 To become trew ligeman with gode entent
 To hym and to his heires without variance.
 Thou art false to god, by thyn owne assent (ll. 25-31).

The poet places full responsibility for the treaty on Philip to stress his perfidy in breaking it. But the Treaty of Troyes was certainly Henry V's "desire;" the provision of the treaty stated that Henry would inherit the French throne upon the death of Charles VI, that he would serve as Regent of France for the remainder of King Charles' life, and that Katherine of France would be given to him in marriage.

The poet suggests that in his "falsnesse" Burgundy never honored the Anglo-Burgundian alliance, but he and Henry did, in fact, engage in several battles against the dauphinist forces after the Treaty of Troyes. Sens fell to Henry and Burgundy on 5 June 1420, after a week under siege. Montereau surrendered on 24 June 1420; Philip participated energetically in this siege, since Montereau was the site of his father, John of Burgundy's murder by the dauphin and where his body lay buried. Philip arranged the removal of John's body and its interment at Dijon. The English army dominated in the sieges at Sens and at Montereau, as they did later at the siege of Meaux. It may have been this last campaign that the author of "Scorn of Burgundy" saw as Duke Philip's failure to

join his English ally against Charles the Dauphin. Meaux was a difficult siege that began on 6 October 1421 and endured through a severe rainy winter, and Burgundy did not arrive with reinforcements until spring, when the siege was nearly over.

The poet contrasts Philip's falsehood with Henry V's honoring of the Anglo-Burgundian alliance, reminding him that Henry gave him aid against the dauphinist forces,

ffor whan thou were beseged with many a thousand
Of Armynakes, thay did the rescewe!
Perfourmyng thy desire bothe olde and new,
Euer redy thyn honeur to mayntene and avance (ll. 43-46).

Robbins takes ~~these~~ lines to be a reference to the battle of Cravant, 1423,²⁰ but they are more likely a recollection of the Siege at Cosne-sur-Loire, July 1422. In the latter conflict, the Burgundian town was under siege by the Dauphin's forces and those of the Armagnacs, and Henry would have answered the call for aid, but he was dying. So he sent his brother Bedford to relieve the Burgundians. The result was accomplished so swiftly that Henry was able to learn of it before he died. The Battle of Cravant was not a case of Burgundian forces being besieged; rather a force of English and Burgundian troops mustered at Auxeres, a short distance from Cravant, and defeated not an Armagnac force but "a body of Scottish mercenaries hired by Charles VII."²¹

Henry had died the year before the Battle of Cravant, and with his death the Anglo-Burgundian alliance took rapid steps toward dissolution. The author of "Scorn of Burgundy" recalls what he considered Philip's negligence in recognizing Henry VI, Hal's infant son and successor.

²⁰ Robbins, Notes, p. 294.

²¹ Richard Vaughan, Philip the Good; the Apogee of Burgundy (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), p. 14.

He rebukes Philip's absence from Henry VI's coronation as King of France and praises the Duke of Bedford's magnanimity. Henry was

crowned at Paryse,
Ihon duc of Bedford thyn absence excusyng,
By souffisant warant made by thy devise;
He did thyn omage as to the floure-de-lice,
Nice by condéscent and true inheritance (ll. 34-38).

The poet also criticizes Philip's failure to honor Henry VI during the twenty months the child-king spent in France from June 1430:

thy lige lord thou woldest neuer see,
While he was in france continually
A yere and an half to know his contree (ll. 50-52).

Since the English claim to the French throne was of great importance to the English and continued to be so as late as the reign of Edward IV, Burgundy's affront to Henry VI would have the poet's English audience.

But a greater act of perfidy, according to the ballad, was Philip's treaty with Charles VII at Arras, 21 September 1435. English ambassadors had participated in the peace conference, but neither they nor the French would accept terms that appeared reasonable to the other. Philip's peace with Charles VII is described in "Scorn of Burgundy" as a willful act of falsehood:

Phelippe, at Aras, thy falshed to encrece,
Bothe of thyn avow and othes with all,
Before th'embassatours of trete of pees
Thou shewedest thyself assoilled by a cardinal,
The which was withoute power papall.
Pou did provow charles, rightwis king of france,
fforsaking thy ligelord and frend moste special (ll. 57-63).

Although his alliance with Charles VII was a mistake, Philip did not enter the agreement with the express purpose of stabbing England in the back. Pressured by Charles VII and his own counsellors, Philip was forced to see the treaty as beneficial to Burgundy; his error was not so much his abandonment of the English alliance as it was his belief that Charles VII would honor the treaty.

The incident that provoked the most extensive criticism of Philip occurred less than a year after the peace at Arras. The Duke began preparations for a Siege of Calais early in 1436, recruiting the support of the Flemish in Ghent and Bruges. The three poems that treat the siege present varying views of the same incidents: "Calais, 1436" emphasizes the defence of the city; "Scorn of Burgundy" stresses the failure of all the Duke's plans; "Mockery of the Flemings" describes the incompetence of Burgundy's subjects, the Flemings. The presence of an English spy in Ghent enabled the English to get wind of Burgundy's plans and to ready Calais' defenses. The ballad "Calais, 1436" describes the fortifications ordered by the lieutenant of Calais, Sir John Radcliffe, and throughout the poem individual deeds are acclaimed. The poet names two men who designed the defenses:

The lord Cameux at the Boleyn yate,
The Bulwerk he did vndertake, (ll. 61-62)

and two other citizens constructed a bulwark,

At the mylkyate, ser william of Asshton,
And ser geffray warberton (ll. 67-68).

Robbins quotes C. L. Kingsford's identification of Cameux as "'Roger, lord Camoys, a somewhat obscure person not know to the peerages. He was perhaps a younger son of Thomas, the fifth lord. . . .'"²² Robbins suggests that William of Assheton was actually Sir John Assheton, who served King Henry V at Agincourt.²³

The early warning of Philip's intent also gave the city time to lay in stores of food. Again the author of "Calais, 1436" commends

²² Robbins, Notes, p. 291.

²³ Robbins, Notes, p. 291.

individuals who helped ready the city, in this case

the gode comon,
That had stuffed wel the town
With godes and vitaille (ll. 85-87).

The poet also gives credit to achievements of the women and children who prepared the stones and the "boiled caudrons" to hurl when the walls were assaulted (l. 94). The poet's concern to extend praise to every level of the population of Calais is warranted by their valiant defense of the city. Philip's blockade had been delayed by poor weather and lack of cooperation from the Flemings, and when the fleet finally arrived, it departed after only two days, but the Flemings were able to stop the mouth of the harbor with large, older ships filled with stone and mortared bricks. "Calais, 1436" describes the blockade and the citizens' intrepid retaliation:

they come with grete Navy,
With bulged shippes ful craftily,
The hauen forto haue shent,
At friday nyght; but on the morow,
Than began the dukes sorow,
His shippes whan he saw brent (ll. 139-144).

The poet's patriotic audience would have delighted in this detail because the Flemings are presented as incompetent beside the daring and resourceful Englishmen. In another poem, "Mockery of the Flemings," the author gives a satiric treatment of the Flemings and relates the above incident with more relish, asking them to

Remembres how ye drowned att full see for þe nones
With shippes Caleis hauen massoned with stones,
And how that þe calisers hem brake the next day,
When it was lawe watir, and bare hem clene away--
Euery stikke & stone, & lafte not ther one log (ll. 27-31).

The citizens had waited until the tide receded and then "when out with axes and demolished the obstructions. The timber came in handy for

the stones were given to the church of St. Mary to be used for building."²⁴

To impress upon his audience the competence of the English contrasted with the failures of Philip of Burgundy, the author of "Scorn of Burgundy" focuses on the activities of the English leaders beyond the walls of Calais. The author recalls

the flemmynges beside grauelyn
How thay encountered Morteigne as he was homward;
He slow of hem hundredes hymself defendyng (ll. 65-67).

The incident described is one of the English raids along the Flemish coast. "Mockery of the Flemings" also treats the incident, but this poet describes it as another proof of the weakness of the Flemings:

When the erle of Mortein come passing with his pray
Before youre toun of Grauenyng, where ye as men bold
Com rennyng on hym fersli as lyons of Cotteswold,
.
Til of you iij hundrid lay strechid on the sandes.
Ye fled þen in-to Grauenyng and wold no lenger bide,
And gaue þe erle leue to passe ouer that same tyde (ll. 6-18).

In his description of the Flemings in this skirmish the author suggests that "these 'bold' men attacked the English with the ferocity of sheep ('fersly as lyons of Cotteswold')." ²⁵ Robbins glosses the text with a parallel description in The Brut but makes no attempt to identify "the erle of Morteigne." V. J. Scattergood identifies the leader of this raid as the Earl of Morton. ²⁶ This interpretation could not be correct because in 1436 there was no earldom of Morton—James Douglas was created first earl of Morton in 1458; the reference is to Edmund Beaufort, who was created Earl of Mortain by Henry V, and he carried this title until

²⁴ Vaughan, p. 79.

²⁵ V. J. Scattergood, Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), p. 86.

²⁶ Scattergood, p. 86.

assumed the dukedom of Somerset upon the death of his brother.²⁷ Beaufort had been plundering the Flemish coast south of Gravelines in May, and it was on his return to the harbor that he surprised a small, disorganized Flemish force and easily overcame them. "Calais, 1436" describes another attack led by Beaufort:

And so befell, and on a thursday,
The Erle of Morteigne made afray
At Saint Peters on the playn;
He drove hem to her tentes nere,
And he toke many a prisoner,
And many of hem weere slayn (ll. 133-138).

With a body of troops, Beaufort issued forth from the Boulogne gate of Calais and surprised a small force from Bruges. It was at the time of this skirmish that Philip re-located his camp from the west end of the city to the east. "Scorn of Burgundy" and "Calais 1436" each refers to this incident and both condemn Burgundy for cowardice. The latter asserts that after a shot had been fired into his tent, Philip

logged hym no nere,
At the southwest corner,
Of gones he had a songe;
That anon he left his place,
And to the est ende he made a chace (ll. 109-113).

In "Scorn of Burgundy" the author's account of Philip's re-location is much more scathing. The writer asserts that Philip's

princehode was vtterly reprevd
Whan thou tofore Calais thy tentes and pight
And for feer of shotte thou backward remeued (ll. 81-83).

The last English attack before the flight of Burgundy and his remaining Flemish was the destruction of "a wooden tower which the men of Ghent had erected in the dunes to the east of the town," which sent

²⁷The Complete Peerage, by G. E. C., Rev. & enlg., ed. H. A. Doubleday et al, Vol. 9 (London: St. Catherine's Press, 1945).

through the Ghenters' camp "a wave of panic and defeatism."²⁸ Each poem dealing with the siege describes this incident. "Calais, 1436," leading up to the Duke's abandonment of the siege, states simply that

within a while,
Drawen down was his bastyle,
With many a hardy man (ll. 145-147).

The author of "Mockery of the Flemings" focuses on the builders of the tower, insinuating that the Flemings' unwarranted pride was at least partly responsible for the fall of the tower:

Remembres ye of Gaunt eke, for al youre pride & bost,
Wonnen was youre bulwerk beside youre gret host,
And slayn all that was therin. . . . (ll. 41-43)

The account in "Scorn of Burgundy" presents the destruction of the tower as a personal failure for Burgundy and as retribution for his sacrilegious oath-breaking:

A gretter shame at sege gat hym neuer knyght,
fforto see thy bastyle be stroied by goddes myght--
It was thy grete trust and chief ordenance.
Thy peple therin were slayn down right,
Wite thyn owne falsnes al thy myschance (ll. 84-88).

The same night the tower fell the arrival of the English reinforcements in a considerable clamor led the Ghenters to believe that Humphrey of Gloucester had arrived with the main English force, and they fled; Philip's own departure followed closely. "Scorn of Burgundy" therefore ascribes Philip's flight to his "drede of bataille" with Gloucester (l. 95). The author of "Calais, 1436" depicts this fear as a more legitimate one; he gives the reason for Burgundy's flight as

verray knowyng
Of the duc of Gloucester commyng (ll. 157-158).

²⁸Vaughan, p. 80.

Linking the flight more closely to the dismay caused by the destruction of the tower, "Mockery of the Flemings" describes how the Ghenters

that same night
ffled ouer Grauenyng watir, but go þat go myght;
And youre lord with you, for dreed and for fere
Of the duyk of Gloucester-- & yette was he not þer! (ll. 43-46)

Philip abandoned the siege on 28 July, and Gloucester arrived two days later. Only "Scorn of Burgundy" alludes to his actual arrival and briefly describes his raid into Flanders where he

soght the in flandres with swerd and with fyre,
Nyne daies brennyng, no pees did he make (ll. 99-100).

In his desire to criticize Burgundy, the poet causes Humphrey's descent upon Flanders to appear as a powerful pursuit of the besiegers, while it was actually a mere plundering raid, though a very well-executed one.

The final conflicts of the Hundred Years War, the gradual loss of England's possessions in Normandy and Guienne, are not dealt with in the poetry. The victories of Crécy, Poitiers, and Agincourt were over, and the English people's sentiments towards the war were altering. Though it refers to no actual incidents, the anonymous prayer "That Peace May Stand" accords with the attitude prevalent in the days that ended the Hundred Years War:

For I haue mych mervel of mony men
at of more myscheu wold be full feyne,
And syche as kan no resyn ken,
at wold er schulde be trobul ageyne;
And hase hade knoleg whare and when
how mony a gud mon has ben slene.
me thynke at konsyons schuld hom ken
to pray for pes with all þer mene (ll. 13-20).

CHAPTER III

THE PEASANTS' REVOLT

". . . Why the Peasants' Revolt, by the way?"

"Well, it's an interesting time. And I thought it would please Pop."

"Is he interested in social reform, then?"

"No, but he hates kings."

Josephine Tey
The Daughter of Time

In the poetry pertaining to the Peasants' Revolt we encounter no praise of any factions or individuals, not even of the King's men who repressed the Revolt. Three poems deal with events in this rebellion of 1381 and there are also two of John Ball's verse letters. One political prophecy has been associated with the Revolt. "The Course of Revolt," 1381, is a poem of fifty-two lines which has characteristics of a complaint. R. B. Dobson regards it as "a crude attempt to provide a verse narrative rather than interpretation of the great revolt."¹ The unknown author is apparently hostile to the revolt, but he offers no praise for the repression which followed the rising. Instead, he displays an unswerving loyalty towards his king. In each stanza he addresses a particular incident in the revolt, and every other line is a commentary in Latin on the incident described. We may assume, therefore, that the poem was addressed to an audience that knew Latin.

¹R. B. Dobson, The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 (London: MacMillan, 1970), p. 358.

"The Insurrection and Earthquake," 1382, is likewise an anonymous complaint, but the author's criticism is broader than that of "The Course of Revolt." He attacks the sinful lives of all men living at this time. The eighty-eight lines of unveiled warnings seem to be the view of an orthodox clergyman. Dobson suggests that the author was a clerk. Though the poet perceives a universal state of wickedness, his intended audience seems to be the wealthy.

Even more than these two poems, the four-line poem "On the Evil State of England," 1381, can be described as a complaint. The anonymous author could have sprung from any social class; he does not appear to be a strong partisan of the Revolt nor an ardent supporter of the King and his ministers. The warning he offers appears to be directed toward the common man.

John Ball's verse letters are the only pieces that sympathize with the peasants. Often called "the mad priest of Kent," Ball had preached against corruption in the Church and State long before the Revolt. These letters were circulated after Ball's release from Maidstone when the Revolt began in June of 1381.² The first of the two letters is directed toward the common people of England, while the second is addressed to groups of laborers within the revolt. Each begins with a prose greeting, and the second one ends with a closing written in Latin. The letters condemn corruption and injustice and encourage the people to stand together in righteous rebellion.

Because of its suggestions of upheaval, "A Political Prophecy by the Dice" has been linked to the Peasants' Revolt.³ This prophecy is

²Philip Lindsay and Reg Groves, The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 (London: Hutchinson, n. d.), p. 86.

³Robbins, Notes, p. 316.

distinct from the other included in Robbins' anthology because of its use of the casts of the dice to suggest a conflict between factions within England. With numbers bearing symbolic significance, there is a notable lack of the standard cryptic symbols, such as flowers or animals. But like most political prophecies, "A Political Prophecy by the Dice" is directed toward a general audience.

The immediate cause of the Peasants' Revolt, the Poll Tax of 1380-81 and the commissioners who collected it, is referred to at the opening of "The Course of Revolt." The author views the tax as the source of far-reaching strife:

The taxe hath tened vs alle,
probat hox mors tot validorum (ll. 1-2).

The Poll Tax of 1380-81 was a return to the system of the 1377 tax on each member over fifteen years of age of every household. The rate in 1377 was four pence a head, but in 1380 it was raised to one shilling, a real burden for a poor family. The peasants regarded such a tax on lives as intolerable, and they were more willing to accept a tax on property, such as the tax of 1379. The inevitable resistance and evasion led to the appointment of commissioners who were sent to the shires to investigate the evasion and collect the tax.

However, the sympathies of the author of "The Course of Revolt" are not with the Revolt. The ruin he laments that the tax has caused is the ruin of the entire nation, for the tax has stirred up the unruly masses. The blame for the insurrection he places first on the commissioners who exacted the tax from the commons. These collectors, who were often accused of pocketing the proceeds, were ultimately robbing their king, who derived little revenue from the tax:

The Kyng perof had small,
ffuit in manibus cupidorum (ll. 3-4).

Although he initially condemns the dishonest collectors, the poet soon abandons the reasons for the revolt and begins tracing the wave of destruction brought about by the reactionary peasants. As he describes the violent resistance to the tax, the author reveals his view of the peasants as a lawless mob. He omits any further mention of their grievances and refrains from analyzing the Revolt in order to maintain this impression of the unruliness of the rebels.

The poet places the outbreak of the Revolt in Kent, where

care be-gan,
mox infestando potentes (ll. 9-10).

Actually, the first act of violence took place in Essex, on 30 May 1381. One of the newly appointed commissioners Thomas de Bamptoun, arrived in Brentwood to collect the tax from those who had evaded it. When his demand for the outstanding money was refused, he threatened the men of Brentwood and its surrounding villages with arrest. The mob from the villages of Fobbing, Stanford-le-Hope, and Corringham drove the commissioner out of Brentwood. Then, on 2 June, Robert Bealknap, Chief Justice of the Common Bench, came to Brentwood to conduct an inquest into the insurrection; he was seized by the rebels and forced to swear that he would not hold such a session of inquest again.

The poet's emphasis on the violence in Kent is understandable, though, because most of the leadership of the revolt originated in Kent. Rebellion broke out in Kent shortly after the incidents in Essex. At Rochester a force of Essex and Kentish men attacked Rochester Castle where a serf from Gravesend was imprisoned. When the constable surrendered, the mob rushed in, released all the prisoners, and ransacked the castle. It was after this assault that the commons arrived at Maidstone and chose Wat Tyler as their leader on 6 June. The poet does not, however, mention

Tyler, still conveying a view of the peasants as an unruly mass of rustics (which of course they were). He describes their movements as wild and uncontrolled:

On rowtes þo Rebawdes þey ran,
Sua turpida arma ferentes.
 ffoles þey dred no man,
Regni Regem, neque gentes;
 Llades þey were þere Cheveteyns,
Sine iure fere superantes (ll. 11-16).

Little is known of Tyler's occupation, save that his name signifies one who laid tiles, and his place of birth is a matter of controversy; Philip Lindsay insists that Tyler was from Essex, while May McKisack thinks it more likely that he was from Kent. Whatever his origin his abilities as a leader are obvious judging by the fact that he led this mass of "Rebawdes" to London and briefly controlled the city.

"The Course of Revolt" alludes to the destruction of manors and manorial records by the peasants as they raided their way thorough Kent and Essex to London. The documents they destroyed enumerated the obligations between lord and serf. At each town or village

Maneres down þey drowght;
In regno non meliora,
 Harmes they dyde y-nought;
habeurunt libera lora (ll. 21-24).

The manors destroyed were usually those of government officials. At Dartford they burned documents of the coroner of Kent, Thomas Shardelow, and also the records in the house of Elias Raynor of Strood. At North Cray they destroyed the manor of Nicholas Herring. In Essex the mysterious rebel who called himself Jack Straw led an assault on Highbury Manor, the home of Sir Robert Hales, the hated treasurer of England who had designed the collection of the Poll Tax. The poet does not mention the destruction of the palace of Archbishop Simon of Sudbury, who, as the originator

of the Poll Tax, was hated as fiercely as Hales. The rebels, having marched through Kent, arrived at Canterbury on 10 June, looted Sudbury's palace, and burned the documents there. They also released John Ball who had been imprisoned by Sudbury, and Ball, too, assumed a place in the leadership of the Revolt.

When the commons reached London they destroyed John of Gaunt's palace, the Savoy. The burning of this mansion must have been, for the rebels, the most satisfying of all, and it is the pillage condemned most sternly by the author of "The Course of Revolt." He mourns the destruction of the palace:

Savoy semely sette,
heul funditus igne cadebat, (ll. 39-40)

and for this atrocity the poet asserts that for the rebels "deth was ther dewe dett (l. 43)." The peasants' hatred of John of Gaunt surpassed even that which they held for Sudbury and Hales. Dobson speculates that their hatred of Gaunt may have originated with the infamous Poll Tax of 1377, for which they held him responsible.⁴ Also, it was he who held the reigns of governmental power during the minority of Richard II.

Gaunt was in Scotland at the time of the Revolt and the burning of his palace at Savoy, but Sudbury and Hales, the other "enemies of the people," were less fortunate. "The Course of Revolt" condemns the murders of these men, and in his effort to portray the rebels as a lawless mob the poet presents their victims as being more virtuous than they actually were:

laddes lowde they lowght,
Clamantes voce sonora,
The bischop wan þey slowght (ll. 17-19).

⁴Dobson, p. 103

Describing Hales as a "dowghty knyght," the poet refers to how

dolefully he was dysght,
Cum stultis pace remota (ll. 33, 36-37).

These men were hardly as guiltless as the poet suggests. As I stated earlier, it was Sudbury who devised the Poll Tax, while Hales organized its collection. There is also a well-known story of how Sudbury had defiled the sacredness of Saint Thomas a Becket's shrine at Canterbury by denouncing a group of pilgrims "for their superstitiou hopes of special indulgences in jubilee years."⁵ Regardless of the justness of such a taunt, the incident would undoubtedly arouse hatred among the commons of England who revered the Saint. These officials were captured when Tyler and his men took control of London. Sudbury and Hales had sought sanctuary in the chapel of Saint John in the Tower, and the rebels seized them and summarily beheaded them on Tower Hill. Philip Lindsay remarks that "knowing how their cruel exactions had made them, next to Gaunt, the most hated men in England, they had, it seems, expected their doomm . . . and were now preparing themselves for death."⁶

The assault on the Tower was led by Jack Straw. He is the only one of the rebels mentioned by name in "The Course of Revolt," and for the poet he seems to represent the vaulting ambition of the peasants:

Iak Strawe made yt stowte
Cum profusa comitiua
 And seyde al schuld hem lowte,
Anglorum corpora viua.
 Sadly can they schowte,
pulsant pietatis oliua,
 þe wycche were wont to lowte,
aratrum traducere stiua (ll. 25-32).

⁵Lindsay and Groves, p. 68.

⁶Lindsay and Groves, p. 118.

In the poem Straw is mistaken for Wat Tyler, an error made frequently in contemporary accounts of the Revolt. The poet refers to Tyler's death at Smithfield:

Iak straw down þey cast
Smethefeld virtute superna (ll. 49-50).

It was Tyler who met with Richard at Smithfield and was murdered by the mayor of London, William Walworth, on 15 June. Straw was later captured and executed in London.

A much different account of the Revolt is given in "Insurrection and Earthquake." The author views the Revolt as a symptom of the immoral and sinful lives of men and a warning to repent and reform. The warnings, which "beo wonder & fele" (l. 12), he sees are the rising of the peasants, the outbreak of the bubonic plague in 1379, and the earthquake that occurred on 21 May 1382. The Revolt is a warning particularly to the lords, for

Whon þe Comuynes bi-gan to ryse,
 Was non so gret lord, as I gesse,
 at þei in herte bi-gon to gryse,
 And leide heore Iolyte in presse.
 Wher was þenne heore worpinesse,
 Whon þei made lordes droupe & dare?
 Of alle wyse men I take witnesse,
 þis was a warnyng to be ware (ll. 17-24).

The earthquake is viewed in the same way. Like the Revolt, it caused the wealthiest of men to doubt the value of their earthly possessions. When it struck,

Was non so proud, he nas a-gast,
 And al his Iolite for-sok,
 And þouȝt on god whil þat hit last (ll. 33-36).

The poet links "þe Pestilens" with "þe Rysing of þe comuynes in londe" and "þe eorþe-quake" as warnings of

þe grete vengauce & wrake
 þat schulde falle for synnes sake (ll. 57-61).

Chambers' The Book of Days mentions "Insurrection and Earthquake" as

"something of a curiosity" that depicts the earthquake (and the revolt) "as a great warning to an over-careless people."⁷

Another poem that treats the Revolt as a warning is the complaint "On the Evil State of England," However, this poet reacts not to havoc and destruction of the peasants but to the punishment of those who had participated in the Revolt:

Man be ware and be no fool:
þenke apon þe ax, and of þe stool!
þe stool was hard, þe ax was scharp,
þe iijȝere of kyng Richard (ll. 1-4).

The reference to the "hard" stool and the "scharp" ax would be taken as a criticism of the harsh punishment meted to the rebels in Essex, where Robert Tresilian, Justice of the King's Bench, executed numerous rebels at Colchester and at Chelmsford, and the author may have used such words as "hard" and "scharp" to amplify the warning against the rebellion.

The only pieces that are sympathetic to the Revolt are the verse letters of John Ball. The first, most general letter refers to the sin present in the world, where

couetise is holden wise
lechery without shame,
gluttonie without blame (ll. 2-4).

The author of "Insurrection and Earthquake" saw the evils of the Revolt as a warning against such sins, but John Ball urges his wide audience to regard them as evidence that "God doe boote for nowe is time (l. 7)." His tactic in this letter is to depict the presence of vice as a justification for revolt.

⁷ R. Chambers, The Book of Days: a Miscellany of Popular Antiquities . . . Including Oddities of Human Life and Character, Vol. I of II (London & Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, n. d.).

Oman describes Ball's second letter as having "a more practical and political bearing."⁸ In his prose introduction to the letter, Ball addresses himself to "Iohan nameless, & Iohn þe mullere and Iohon cartere," but although the audience seems more specific in this letter, the names are not meant to signify individuals. As R. B. Dobson points out, "the names of the recipients of the letters are 'masonic' rather than genuine names of identifiable rebels."⁹ The instructions in the letter are more political, as the poet urges the people represented by the 'masonic' names to

knowe 3our frend fro 3our foo.
 haueth y-now & seith hoo!
 and do wel and better and fleth synne,
 and sekep pees and hold 3ow þer-inne (ll. 4-7).

Dobson says of John Ball's letters that they reveal "two essential characteristics of the author and his audience--a strong sense of personal identification with the ideal of a social brotherhood, and a deeply personal devotion to the simple and literal truths of the Christian religion."¹⁰

There is a possible connection between the insurrection of the peasants and the political upheaval foretold in "A Political Prophecy by the Dice."¹¹ The symbolic casts of the dice suggest a change from and England governed by a minority to one governed by the majority, during a time when

⁸C. Oman, The History of England from the Accession of Richard II to the Death of Richard III, 1377-1485, Vol. IV of The Political History of England (1906; rpt. New York: Kraus Rpt., 1969), p. 254.

⁹Dobson, p. 380.

¹⁰Dobson, p. 380.

¹¹Robbins, Notes, p. 316.

	the name of the six spring vonder wyde.	<u>idem</u>
<u>idem</u>	Three set A-side and two clene schent,	<u>vulgas</u>
<u>proditores</u>	ye schal haue a new king At a new parlement.	<u>idem</u> <u>billingue</u>
<u>idem</u>	Six schal vp and one schal vnder (ll. 4-7).	<u>idem</u>
<u>vulgas</u>		<u>rex</u>

Robbins notes that "since prophecies have heralded most disturbances, one might speculate (although the MSS. are later) whether this has any reference to the 1381 Revolt."¹² The prophecy could, indeed have anticipated events in the fifteenth century, which, from the dates of the manuscripts, seems quite plausible. Rupert Taylor includes a version of this prophecy in The Political Prophecy in England, but the version he prints was combined with another prophecy as one poem. This piece was found in the state papers of Henry VIII.¹³ Taylor further notes that "the date 1450 is written at the close of another version in MS. Harleian 7332."¹⁴ In the version printed by Robbins, the Latin glosses explain the significance of the numbers, the one representing the king and the six the common people, with the numbers between signifying the factions in conflict, such as five, the religiosi or clergy. Once the significance of the numbers is understood, the poem "becomes a protest of distinctively lower-class sympathies with emphasis on removing flatterers and traitors and disregarding the lords and the clergy."¹⁵ It is possible that the prophecy is older than the manuscripts in which it is found, and if

¹²Robbins, Notes, p. 316.

¹³Taylor, p. 116.

¹⁴Taylor, p. 116.

¹⁵V. J. Scattergood, Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), p. 359.

the poem anticipates the Peasants' Revolt, it would have been intended as encouragement for the commons and a warning to the political factions already in power.

The poetry that treats the Peasants' Revolt is remarkable for its dearth of praise for any of the conflicting factions, with the exception of Ball's letters. The poets who condemn the peasants do not defend the Poll Tax and make no excuses for the unscrupulous collectors. They are, however, united in their fealty to Richard, the fourteen year-old boy-king, who was the only man who stood with dignity and faced the mob.

CHAPTER IV

THE WARS OF THE ROSES

Grant took the book she had left him off the pile again, and tried to make head or tail of the Wars of the Roses. He failed. Armies marched and counter-marched. York and Lancaster succeeded each other as victors in a bewildering repetition. It was as meaningless as watching a crowd of dodgem cars bumping and whirling at a fair.

Josephine Tey
The Daughter of Time

The intense partisanship rampant in England during the Wars of the Roses produced a mass of propaganda poetry. Twenty-six poems in Historical Poems of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries treat incidents in the war from the early errors of Henry VI's reign to the accession of Henry VII. Six of the poems are staunchly pro-Lancastrian, while twelve are pro-Yorkist. Five writers treat events of Henry VI's reign prior to the period when battles ripped England apart. "Lament of the Duchess" is a lament of 136 lines which has a narrative opening, the first speaker introducing the duchess' lament. The medieval notion of the wheel of fortune is introduced repeatedly as the Duchess bewails her fate. Each of the seventeen eight-line stanzas ends with the poet's assertion (uttered by the Duchess) that "All women may be ware by me." The author may have been attached to the court because he displays knowledge of the particulars of Eleanor of Gloucester's trial and sentence.

A long epitaph for Humphrey of Gloucester entitled "Epitaph for Gloucester" "may have been used on a roll exhibited by the tomb at the time of the burial," judging by references to the sepulchre.¹ The writer

¹Robbins, Notes, p. 347.

was probably a clergyman because while he praises Humphrey's actions during his lifetime, he sees those deeds as supportive of the Church, and he constantly asserts the importance of the soul over the body.

"Examples of Mutability" is similar in structure to the above poem, having eight eight-line stanzas, save the last one which has nine lines. Robbins dates the poem no later than 1466, since the last incident the poet depicts occurred in 1447, and the writer admits to having seen "scarcely twenty years in this land wondrous changes" (Robbins' paraphrase).² I disagree with this dating because in the second stanza the poet makes the point that one needn't seek ancient chronicles of Roman times to find

the ruyen & fallys manyffolde
off prynces greet (ll. 11-12).

Robbins misreads the poet's insistence that he has seen such catastrophes "here In thys lande with-In the xx yere" (l. 14), "off whiche I shall reherse suche as I can" (l. 17). I therefore suggest a date sometime after 1447 but certainly not necessarily twenty years later.

The anonymous poem "Arrest of Suffolk" is one of two poems in the anthology not divided into stanzas. The author of this thirty-line celebration of the Duke's arrest appears to be a commoner and his audience the common people of England. He is not aligned with either York's or Suffolk's party, and he directs his warning against abusing power not only to Suffolk's court party but to "dukes, erles, and barons alle" (l. 30).

"Death of Suffolk" 1450, is an anonymous seventy-two-line poem that has a narrative opening, and the speaker brings forward various

²Robbins, Notes, p. 348.

various members of Suffolk's party, assigning "parts of the Office of the Dead to each of these priests and peers, identifying by the first few words the various antiphons, responses and versicles, and psalms, in order as they appear in the service."³ Scattergood discusses a later version of the poem, which adds seven stanzas in order to attack more members of Suffolk's party.⁴

One of the earliest propagandist poems, "The Ship of State," 1458, is an anonymous pro-Lancastrian piece of eighty-lines, employing the popular allegorical technique of comparing members of a political group to the parts of a ship. Robbins terms the poem "little more than a popular catalogue of the chief figures on the Lancastrian side."⁵ The author seems to be someone close to the party, rather than a commoner, who attempts to raise morale within the party and to encourage popular support.

"Reconciliation, 1458" is less partisan than most of the poems that treat the Wars of the Roses. The author praises the supposed harmony between the Yorkists and Lancastrians in the temporary truce of 1458, and each stanza ends with a thanksgiving for the "concorde & vnite,"

"God Amend Wicked Counsel," 1464, begins with a narrative introducing a second speaker, Henry VI, whose lament comprises the remainder of the poem. The anonymous writer expresses a commoner's criticism of the evil influence of Queen Margaret, and the intended audience is "the cominalte" (l. 38).

³ Robbins, Notes, p. 352.

⁴ V. J. Scattergood, Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), p. 167.

⁵ Robbins, Introduction, p. 256.

James Ryman's "A Remembrance of Henry VI," 1492, is another retrospective portrayal of the King. Robbins identifies Ryman as a Franciscan priest, this poem being his only political work.⁶ Each of the eight seven-line stanzas ends with a refrain asserting that God "Hath graunted the a Ioyefull place," and in the last stanza, the poet prays that those left on earth will also be granted "In blisse with the to haue a place" (l. 56). The pro-Lancastrian "Willikin's Return" is a short carol of twelve lines, directed toward a general audience. Each stanza ends with an encouragement to "let vs all syng nowell," the reference to Christmas leading Robbins to suggest that the poem may have been written after Warwick (Willikin's) restoration of Henry VI.⁷

"Prelude to the Wars," 1449, was written by an anonymous adherent of Richard, Duke of York, though Robbins feels that the poem "seems to reflect the dismay and uncertainty of the fluid political situation in 1448 and 49,"⁸ rather than serving as propaganda. One of the earliest poems that refer to military leaders by their cognizances, this is the only piece which glosses the references.

The companion pieces, "Advice to the Court I," and "II," 1450, are each meant to appeal to a general audience because the grievances expressed reflect the sentiment of the commons concerning the Duke of Suffolk's party. The second poem is the longer of the two, and the author's criticism is more specific than that of the first Poem. Because the poet terms "Advice II" a "bill" and because of the use of tail-rhyme

⁶ Robbins, Notes, p. 363.

⁷ Robbins, Notes, p. 361.

⁸ Robbins, Notes, p. 363.

stanzas, Robbins suggests that the poem was "a popular song, perhaps for distribution in London."⁹

"Take Good Heed," like "Arrest of Suffolk," is structured as one long stanza. The pro-Yorkist sentiment is directed to the party itself rather than to the common people. Robbins adopts Brotanek's dating of the poem between the end of 1457 and March 1458 because the warning against treachery seems appropriate for this brief period of reconciliation between Lancaster and York.¹⁰

The anonymous "Ballade on the Gates" is a handbill addressed, in its closing, "to the ryghte Worshypfulle Cyte of Caunterbury." It was composed, Robbins says, just before Richard of York's invasion of 28 June 1460. Most of the ten eight-line stanzas end with the latin phrase "Omne caput languidum, et omne cor merens." Robbins regards the poem as "a good illustration of the poetic commission;"¹¹ the author's aim is to encourage Yorkist sympathy to support Richard's attack on Henry VI's court.

In his note to "The Battle of Northampton," 1460, Robbins refers to C. L. Kingsford's observation that his poem and two other Yorkist celebratory poems, "The Battle of Towton," 1461, and "Twelve Letters," 1461, are "'of a high degree of merit, and have a certain similarity of form which suggests that they may be the work of one writer.'"¹² The last two poems are intended to arouse support for the newly-instated

⁹Robbins, Notes, p. 365.

¹⁰Robbins, Notes, p. 367.

¹¹Robbins, Introduction, xxxvii.

¹²Robbins, Notes, p. 371.

Yorkist regime, while the first was composed before the Yorkists laid claim to the throne. In "Twelve Letters" there are problems in interference because of the author's use of present tense in reference to Richard of Salisbury and Richard of York, who were dead at the time of the poems's composition.¹³

"Edward Dei Gracia" is a Yorkist poem of praise for Edward's accession. The anonymous author is an adherent of Edward, and his purpose is to arouse enthusiasm for the King. Robbins dates the poem prior to May 1464, the date of Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, because of the reference (a doubtful one in any case) to Edward as a "vergyne knight" (l. 14).¹⁴

The long poem "A Political Retrospect" seems to be the work of a strong Yorkists supporter; he consistently regards the Lancastrian kings, especially Henry IV, as usurpers. Each of the fourteen eight-line stanzas ends with a reference, with variations, to the "gret languor" forced upon England by the Lancastrians, which now is cured by the Yorkist rule.

The anonymous "Battle of Barnet," 1471, is a short poem of praise for the Yorkist victory at Barnet, especially for King Edward IV's role in the battle. Each stanza urges the common people to put aside Lancastrian loyalties and accept Edward, commanding "ye comons" to "drede your kyng."

In the lament "The Death of Edward IV." the anonymous writer employs the ubi sunt motif as he mourns the passing of the King. A devout Yorkist, he directs his lament to a general audience, ending each of the

¹³ Robbins, Notes, p. 379.

¹⁴ Robbins, Notes, p. 381.

ten stanzas with the assertion that "All men of England ar bound for hym to pray."

Two lyrics give a figurative account of the ending of the Wars of the Roses, "Roses Entwined" and "LilyWhite Rose." Robbins dates "Roses Entwined" in 1486, concurring with Chambers and Sidgwick (earlier editors of the poem) who see the poem as depicting the union of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York.¹⁵ "Lily White Rose" Robbins sees as describing the same event, and he dates this shorter lyric (fourteen lines) in 1486 also.¹⁶

The earliest event in Henry VI's reign that is treated in the poems is Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester's arrest for withcraft and for conspiracy against the King's life. The author of "Lament of the Duchess" narrates the poem through the Duchess' mouth to convey his belief in her guilt to the audience and to suggest that she was totally repentant. Using this technique, the author forces the Duchess to admit her guilt *freely* freely:

'My clerkys callyd up and downe,
All was but mischeue that they ment;
Owre souerayn lord and kyng with crowne
Hym to distroye was owre entent' (ll. 57-60).

The Duchess was charged with dabbling in the occult with a clerk named Roger Bolingbroke, who practiced astrology, and Margery Jourdain, "commonly known as the Witch of Eye."¹⁷ The conspirators were accused of plotting the death of Henry VI by means of a wax image of the King. While Eleanor

¹⁵ Robbins, Notes, p. 299.

¹⁶ Robbins, Notes, p. 299.

¹⁷ C. Oman, The History of England from the Accession of Richard II to the Death of Richard III, 1377-1485, Vol. IV of The Political History of England (1906; rpt. New York: Kraus Rpt., 1969), p. 254.

admitted to consorting with the astrologer and the witch, she denied the attempt on Henry's life. The author of "Lament of the Duchess" would have been aware that she denied the charge because he is familiar with the particulars of her trial. Therefore, her admission of guilt in the poem reflects the contemporary belief that the Duchess had, indeed, attempted to bring about Henry's death.

In the poem the Duchess narrates the course of her trial and conviction, which took place

'By-fore the counsell of thys lond,
At westmynster vpon a day,' (ll. 73-74)

and she relates that she was tried by

Two cardinallys and bis-hoppys fiue,
And other clerkys of gret degre' (ll. 89-90).

The cardinals who presided were Henry Beaufort and John Kemp, and the bishops were sent by Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury. In the poem Eleanor describes the penance the court meted to her:

'Thorow-owt london in many a strete,
Of tho that were most principall,
I went barefote vpon my fote' (ll. 97-99).

The Duchess' sentence was to walk for three days through the streets of London, barefoot, wrapped in a sheet, and carrying a candle weighing one pound. She forfeited her house at Greenwich and was sentenced to banishment, strictly confined in a series of castles, the first being Chester. However, the poet mistakenly identifies Eleanor's destination as Liverpool:

ffarewell, Grenewyche, for euer and ay,
ffarewell, fayre place upon temys syde!
.....
At lerpole ther must I neds byde (ll. 107-111).

The author of "Lament of the Duchess" presents Eleanor's fall as resulting from a turn of the wheel of fortune. At the beginning of the Duchess'

lament she refers to her marriage to Humphrey of Gloucester as an elevation of her estate above her due:

ffor I that was browght up of noght,
A prince me chese to be hys make (ll. 11-12).

After ascending so high on "the whele of fortune," she forgot her "owne astate," and the fickle wheel toppled her (ll. 21, 17). The poet's moral viewpoint intrudes when the Duchess describes her fall as resulting from her seduction by "welth, wele, and worthiness" (l. 24); she fell from grace through the sin of greed, and she amplifies this view of her fall by comparing it to that of Lucifer:

As lucifer fell downe for pride,
So fell I from felicite (ll. 29-30).

Although the poet presents the Duchess as thoroughly repentant to maintain her guilt, he also ~~elicits~~ ^{elicits} sympathy for her as she constantly begs all women to witness her abasement that they "may be ware by me."

The author of "Examples of Mutability" gives a less sympathetic picture of Eleanor, as guilty but not repentant. He places her among the "men off highe nobleneness" who encounter "furst welthe, and then ageyn distres" (ll. 4-5). Like the author of "Lament of the Duchess" he ascribes Eleanor's fall to the way that "fortune turnethe hur whele" (l. 6). However, he softens when describing the Duchess' penance:

And soo full petyously
she itt perfformed (ll. 37-38).

The author's subordinates his account of Eleanor's sin, trial, and punishment to his interest in the idea of the wheel of fortune; Eleanor is primarily an example of its effects.

The author of "examples of Mutability" next presents John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset as a victim of the wheel of fortune, but the poet is kinder to Somerset than he is to Eleanor of Gloucester, presenting his

death as a more capricious turn of the wheel. He refers to John Beaufort as an English commander in France

whome all brytagne and also normandye
hadde In grett drede (& his enemye3 euerichon)
For his manhode, puissance, & cheualrye (ll. 42044).

Actually, the English people's most recent memories of Beaufort's military activity would have been the Duke's unsuccessful expedition to Guienne. Instead of seeking those English territories that needed aid, Somerset raided Maine and Anjou, a venture that was of little profit to England's position in France.¹⁸ The poet also suggests that fate caused the Duke to die "In his best age" (l. 46); on the contrary, his death occurred just after his ignoble return to England in 1444 on the heels of his failed campaign.

The third example of a fall from power cited in "Examples of mutability" is that of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. The poet refers to the charge the Duke of Suffolk brought against Humphrey:

for suspection off treason
thought and wrought ageynst his crowne (ll. 61-62).

William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, was Humphrey's greatest enemy, and in his struggle for supremacy in the government, Suffolk had tried to turn Henry VI from Gloucester, his uncle, and he eventually put forth a rumor that Humphrey meant to foment a rebellion against the King.

The author of "Examples of Mutability" relates how the charge was leveled

att burye in a full parlyament
by a grett lorde, (ll. 58-59)

and that Humphrey, en route to the Parliament at Bury St. Edmunds, was arrested "or he came to the towne" (l. 59). He was arrested at his

¹⁸Oman, p. 334.

lodgings on 18 February 1447, and he died on 23 February 1447. "Examples of Mutability" does not refer to the report of Gloucester's death; the poet ascribes Humphrey's demise to

shame and angwishe off which, Ieloussye
I-toke hym sone after, & soo lowe brought hym downe
that In short while after I-caused hym to dye (ll. 63-65).

Ernest Jacob suggests that the shock of the arrest brought on what appears to have been (on the medieval evidence) a stroke."¹⁹

The author of "Epitaph for Gloucester," who mourns Gloucester's death and prays for his soul, makes no reference to the circumstances of his arrest or death. The poem reflects the popular view of Humphrey held by the English people, who saw him as "verray fader and protectour of the land" (l. 73). Since his purpose is to glorify the Duke and to obtain mercy "for hym buryed in theis sepulture," the author glosses over Humphrey's many faults, such as his recklessness, his irresponsibility, and his greed.

The popular feeling towards Humphrey influenced the people's view of his rival, Suffolk, and in poetry the treatments of Suffolk's arrest and death reflect the Duke's unpopularity. "Arrest of Suffolk" gives a jubilant account of the Duke's arrest, which would have been applauded by a general audience, for the poet criticizes his iniquities and warns all men of England to beware of such corrupt ministers. The chief crime that the author condemns Suffolk for is the loss of Normandy but especially for John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury's capture at the fall of Rouen:

But he þat tied talbot oure doge, euyll mot he fare!
ffor now we mys the black dog with þe wide mouth,
ffor he wold haue ronnen well a þe fox of the south (ll. 6-8).

¹⁹ E. F. Jacob, The Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485, The Oxford History of England (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 497. I am relying on this source as an authority for dates.

This criticism of Suffolk (the fox) reflects popular sentiment rather than political consciousness--again the author is more concerned with Shrewsbury's capture than with the loss of Normandy. Robbins sees the poem as an expression of the "popular excitement" stirred up by the disasters in France and by the Duke's arrest.²⁰ The House of Commons charged Suffolk with the loss of Normandy as well as his selling Maine to King Rene, titular King of Sicily, in order to secure Henry VI's marriage to Rene's daughter, Margaret of Anjou. "Arrest of Suffolk" does not allude to this unscrupulous act; again, the author is more concerned with personages. Interestingly, he accuses Suffolk of Gloucester's murder; "Pis fox at bury slowe our grete gander." This charge was not itemized by Parliament but was a common conviction.

The author of "Death of Suffolk" refrains from identifying Suffolk's atrocities, but like the author of "Arrest of Suffolk," he is interested in persons, in this case, Suffolk's supporters. Seven of the men referred to were included in a petition presented by the Commons,²¹ which asked that these men be excluded from Henry's court and stripped of their estates. The poet makes these allies of Suffolk integral to the structure of the poem, assigning "parts of the Office of the Dead to each of these priests and peers, identifying by the first few words the various antiphons, responses and versicles, and psalms, in order as they appear in the service."²² In the part of the service called the dirge, John Sutton, Lord Dudley, and Thomas Daniel speak:

²⁰ Robbins, Notes, p. 349. In his note Robbins incorrectly identifies Suffolk as Michael de la Pole.

²¹ Robbins, Notes, p. 352.

²² Robbins, Notes, p. 352.

The baron of Dudley with grete mornynge,
 Redeth, 'tedet animam meam vite mee."
 Who but Danyel 'qui lasarum' shal synge? (ll. 53-55)

Dudley and Daniel were listed on the Parliamentary petition, and Thomas Daniel "was regarded as an adherent of the duke, and was a special object of enmity" to the members of Jack Cade's rebellion.²³

The author of "Death of Suffolk" describes the Duke's murder in the first stanza referring to the Duke by his nickname, Jack the Cnapes and by his cognizance, his 'clog & his cheny:"

Iac Napes wold on the see a maryner to ben,
 With his clog & his cheyn, to seke more treasour.
 Scuh a payn prikked hym, he asked a confessour.
 Nicholas said, 'I am redi thi confessour to be.'
 He was holden so that he ne passed that hour (ll. 3-7).

V. J. Scattergood feels that the author "deliberately misrepresents the nature of Suffolk's journey, by implying it was a voluntary voyage."²⁴ However, I would suggest that the lines in question are not a deliberate misrepresentation; they are consciously satiric, and the audience, who were familiar with the circumstances of Suffolk's death, would have responded to the satire, just as they would have appreciated the author's blessing on the Duke's murders:

His interfectours blessed might thei be,
 And graunte them for ther dede to regne with angelis (ll. 14-15).

After Parliament indicted Suffolk on the charges mentioned earlier, the King halted the proceedings to prevent Suffolk's condemnation and exiled the Duke for five years for his own protection. Crossing the Straits of Dover to France, Suffolk was captured and taken aboard

²³ Jacob, p. 497.

²⁴ Scattergood, p. 163.

Nicholas of the Tower, placed in a small boat, and summarily beheaded; his murderers were never identified.

Many of the grievances against Suffolk are cited in the complaints "Advice to the Court I and II." "Advice I" expounds the danger of the King's having such "fals" ministers as Suffolk, whose influence places 'the loue of alle þe commynalte' in jeopardy (l. 2). "Advice II" attacks the corruptions of the court circle more specific--minster and the suspicion that Suffolk had embezzled money from the crown.

ffor ye haue made the king so pore
That now he beggeth from dore to dore (ll. 4-5).

Like "Arrest of Suffolk," "Advice II" refers to the loss of Normandy, but the author does not mention Shrewsbury's capture, stating simply tht "Suffolk normandy hat swold" (l. 31). The poet's wording is confusing. The Duke was accused of having sold Maine, but the loss of Normandy was attributed to Suffolk's neglect to allocate funds to raise an army to relieve the besieged territory. The author might have used the word "swold" to emphasize supplies for culpability.

"Advice II" also reflects the common people's intense hatred for William Booth, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, later Archbishop of York and in 1449 Queen Margaret's chancellor:

Þe chancelere þat last was hathe staffes take,
Blank charters to don vs wrake,
no nombre of them, hit is fere.
He woll not suffre þe clerekes preche;
Trowth in no wise he will not teche;
he is þe deuels shapard (ll. 49-54).

As Margaret's chancellor Booth would naturally receive some of the venom the common people (especially Londoners) felt towards the Queen. His name was also one of the many on the Parliamentary petition of 1450.

Henry's weakness as a ruler allowed him to be dominated by the corrupt members of the court. But another factor that weakened Henry's hold on the country was his frequent bouts of insanity. The author of "Battle of Northampton," 1460, refers to Henry's mental lapses, expressing the hope still shared by the common people that Henry would recover and rule competently. Describing Henry's capture in the battle, the poet states that as the Earl of March escorted Henry into London

þe pepil reioysed inwardly,
And banked go of this goodeness,
That he likeþ with lustynesse
To endewe þe hunt, oure noble kyng,
Amd to reeve his heuynesse
Which to his recall is no þyng conservyng (ll. 115-120).

"Prelude to the Wars," 1449, deals with the lamentable state of England's domestic and foreign affairs that was brought on by these corrupt ministers and by Henry's weakness. The poet mourns military leaders who are no longer living and bewails the absence or seeming ineffectuality of those who are. He begins by alluding to the deaths of John, Duke of Bedford (d. 1435), Humphrey of Gloucester, and John Holland, Duke of Exeter (d. 1447):

The Rotes is ded, The swanne is goon, Bedforde
Gloucetter
þe fyry Cressett hath lost his lyght (ll. 1-2). Excetter

The poet also mourns the loss of Rouen and the ineffecutality of Edmund Beaufort, Earl of Somerset's, command in France:

The Castell is wonne where care be-gown, Roane
The Portecolys is leyde a down; (ll. 5-6)

The poet especially laments Richard of York's absence in Ireland, since he had been in command of Anglo-Normandy, and might have been able to save the duchy:

The ffawkoun fleyth and hath no rest,
Tille he witte where to bigge his nest (ll. 35-36).

The Duke of Suffolk had engineered Richard's appointment as lieutenant of Ireland in 1447, in order to eliminate any opposition to his plans for Henry's marriage to Margaret of Anjou and the sacrifice of Maine.²⁵ York accepted the honorable exile, and his dedication to the position won support for him in Ireland.

"Prelude to the Wars" is one of the earliest treatments of the Wars of the Roses that employs the technique of referring to lords by their cognizances. When the poet refers to such events as battles, deaths, or exiles he plays on the connotations of the insignia. For instance, in "Prelude to the Wars" to suggest that William Neville, Lord Fauconberg, is helpless to alleviate England's troubles, the poet states that "The ffishere hath lost his hangulhook" (l. 13).

The events in the years following the unrest of 1449 and the Duke of Suffolk's death in 1450, are not treated in the poetry. However, both Yorkist and Lancastrian poets recall Richard of York's loyalty to Henry VI and his struggle against Henry's corrupt court during these years. In "Wicked Counsel," 1464, the poet depicts Henry bewailing his folly in heeding the "wykkyd cownscell" of Queen Margaret," and Richard of York's exile to Ireland is one of the results of her ruinous advice. The King repeats that

'Rychard of yorke, that lord ryal,
He was exilyd for 3eres thre;
Than was I leke to haue a falle,
I clamer vpon a rotyn tre! (ll. 21-24)

The author of "Battle of Northampton" reflects on the injuries done to Richard and the constant loyalty of the Duke,

²⁵Oman, p. 340.

Whom treson ne falshod neuer dyd shame,
 But euer obedient to his souereigne;
 ffalsehod euer-more put hym in blame,
 & lay awayte hym to haue sleighe (ll. 145-149).

Neither "Wicked Counsel" nor "Battle of Northampton" refers to specific instances of York's loyalty. During the Cade Rebellion of 1450 the rebels demanded that York be restored to Henry's court, but instead of using their favor to gain power, York returned from Ireland to assure Henry of his fealty. Besides the exile in Ireland, York was persecuted by Queen Margaret and her allies, particularly Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset. York served as Protector of the realm during the period of Henry's insanity from 1454-1455, but upon the King's recovery Margaret and Somerset had York and his supporters Salisbury and Warwick branded enemies of the crown. The author of "Reconciliation, 1458" praises York's willingness to make peace with Margaret in 1458. The poet's view of the reconciliation was far more optimistic than was warranted. He saw it not only as an outward laying down of arms and grudges, but as a sign of charity and harmony among the opposing leaders:

Love hath put out malicious gouernaunce,
 In euery place bothe fre & bonde.
 In Yorke, In Somerset, as I vnderstonde,,
 In Warrewik also is loue & charite,
 In Sarisbury eke, & in Northumbrelande,
 That euery man may reioise in concord & vnite (ll. 19-24).

This stanza bears an interesting similarity to the ceremony of reconciliation at St. Paul's. Henry led a procession, with York and Margaret hand-clasped behind him, followed by Salisbury and the Earl of Somerset, and then Warwick with Henry Holland, Duke of Exeter. The poet sees the reconciliation from the limited viewpoint of a member of the commons, seemingly unaware of the intense hatred beneath the superficial amicability. The reconciliation was Henry VI's desire and was negotiated by Thomas Bourchier,

Archbishop of Canterbury, and William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester and Chancellor of England. The domestic peace that the poet anticipated was unlikely; "no one save the guileless king could believe that oaths of amity sworn before the altar could induce the two factions to abide in peace."²⁶ Concerned with domestic peace rather than partisanship, the poet is impartial to the two factions, and he does not mention the terms of the agreement--the Yorkists were induced to accept the blame for the conflict between themselves and Margaret's party that erupted in the first Battle of St. Albans. They were also obliged to "endow a charity at St. Albans, where masses should be said for the souls of Somerset and those who fell with him," as well as ~~providing~~ for the widows of the men.²⁷ The poem ends with praise for the city of London for

The first, þe true faithe þat their haue to þe kynge;
The seconde, of love to þe Comynalte;
The thrid, goud rule for euermore kepyng (ll. 59-61).

A different view of the reconciliation is presented in "Take Good Heed." Unlike the author of "Reconciliation, 1458," the Yorkist writer of this piece is very much aware of the unalleviated tension and hatred among the magnates, and he warns the Yorkist leaders York, Warwick, Salisbury, and March against Lancastrian treachery:

Awake, lordes, awake & take goode hede!
ffor som þat speke ful fayre, þei wolde 3our evil spede;
Þou3 þei pere in uou presence with a fayre face,
And her tunge chaunged, þe hert is as it was (ll. 1-4).

Several lines later the poet warns the Yorkists to

²⁶ Oman, p. 372.

²⁷ Oman, p. 372.

Trust not to moche in the fauour of youre foos,
ffor þei be double in wirking, as þe worlde gos (ll. 13-14).

He particularly cautions them against the treachery of those who seemingly support Warwick but are in reality adherents of the Duke of Buckingham and the Lancastrians:

And som þat were þe ragged bottis
Had lever were þe stafford knottis (ll. 33-34).

Despite the poet's awareness of the iniquity in the court circle, his voice is that of the commons who, he says, "ben youres, euer at youre nede" (l. 10).

The author of "Ballade on the Gates" does not mention the break in the temporary reconciliation, the Battle of Blore Heath, 23 September 1459, a skirmish in which Salisbury defeated the Lancastrians Dudley and Audley, but he does allude to the flight of York, March, Salisbury, and Warwick from Ludlow less than three weeks later, where they were pressed by a superior royal force and were deserted by their own despairing troops. The Yorkist poet prays to Christ to

Sende hoom thy trew blode vn-to his propre veyne,
Richard, duk of York, Job thy seruaunt insygne,
Whom Sathan not cesethe to sette at care and dysdeyne;
But by the preserued, he may nat be slayne.
Sette hym ut sedeat in principibus, as he dyd before (ll. 58-62).

The poet's aim is to arouse sympathy and support for York, by dwelling on his Job-like sufferings; however, he does not desire York to assume the crown, but to resume the protectorship. At this time Richard still sought (at least outwardly) only to take his rightful position as leader of the King's council. When referring to March, Salisbury, and Warwick, the author of "Ballade on the Gates" falls into the mode of address that was popular throughout the propagandist poetry, especially in reference to March. The poet calls for the return of

Edwarde, Erle of Marche, whos fame the erthe shall sprede,
 Richard, Erle of Salisbury, named prudence,
 Wythe that noble knyghte and floure of manhode
 Richard, erle of Warrewyk, sheelde of our defence (ll. 65-67).

The first decisive Yorkist victory following the return of these leaders, the Battle of Northampton, 10 July 1460, is the subject of the anonymous poem of the same name. To describe the battle the poet uses terms of hunting, hawking, and fishing. Presenting the battle in this way the author follows the penchant for alluding to lords by their cognizances, in this case primarily those of animals. The frequency of this technique in poems on the Wars of the Roses indicates its popularity with the general audiences that heard these verses. The author follows the tracks of Edward, Earl of March (the bereward) and the Earl of Warwick (the bere), establishing early the mode he intends to adopt in depicting the battle:

Edward, yong of age, disposed in solace,
 In hauking & huntynge to begynne meryly,
 To Northampton with þe bere he toke his trace (ll. 22-24).

The Lancastrians are depicted as dogs chased by the "bere" and the "bereward." John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, was already popularly referred to as "the dog." Robbins notes that the reference to Talbot's having "þe oon dogges name" is to the second Earl of Shrewsbury, "who is supposed to have introduced a race of bloodhounds into England, so named after the family."²⁸ However, the nickname was applied to the first Earl of Shrewsbury in 1450 (see "Arrest of Suffolk"). Other members of the pack of Lancastrians in the battle are

Bauling bewmond anodre, I vnderstonde;
 þe thrid also was made ful tame,

²⁸ Robbins, Notes, p. 372.

He was called bolde egremond.
 When þe bereward come to þe grounde,
 When he chased the forsaid leese,

Amonge all oper a buk he foudne

þe which was hye & fat of greese (ll. 34-40).

Each of the three lords mentioned in this stanza, Viscount Beamont, Lord Egremont, and Humphrey Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, was killed in the battle, but the poet alludes only to Buckingham's death.

The poet uses fishing terms to describe the Earl of Salisbury's activity in London while Edward, Warwick, and Fauconberg were engaged at Northampton. Richard of Salisbury is the eagle who

from london was neuer remeving,
 But hovid & wayted vpon his pray;
 All his delite was euer in fisshing,
 Þe fisse were closed in pyttes alway.

.

Þe egle ligted & made hem to loute,
 Þe fisse was feynte, & litell of might;

.

All þei had scaped vpon a nyght,
 Saue þeire skales were plucked away (ll. 121-138).

After Warwick, March and Salisbury marched into London on 2 July 1460, they left Salisbury there to besiege the Tower where the Lancastrians Lord Scales, Hungerford, Lovel, and Vesey lay. "Battle of Northampton" indicates that all but Scales escaped, but the author does not suggest the manner of Scales's death. After he was released, Scales sought sanctuary at Westminster but "was set upon and slain by a mob of London watermen."²⁹

²⁹Oman, p. 394.

Describing Henry's capture in the battle, the poet takes pains to exonerate Edward and Warwick of any intent to harm the King or to seize the throne. After the Lancastrian leaders were taken, Warwick saved Henry (the hunt)

from harme þat day--
 He þouȝt neuer oþer in all his myde--
 He lowted downe, & at his fote lay,
 In token to hym that he was kynde.
 The breward also, þe huntis frende,
 ffell downe on kne, saying with obedience:
 'Souereigne lord, thenk vs not vnkynde,
 Nor take ye this in none offence' (ll. 57-64).

The poet works to make the battle appear to be an assault on corrupt Lancastrian leaders but not on the King. His statement that Edward bore Henry to London "ful reuerently" is not simply propoganda, though. Henry was, in fact, treated tenderly, and as his father had always done, Edward professed his loyalty. Oman remarks that "with the king in their hands they could assume the pose of loyal subjects, nominate a new ministry, and throw the odium of disloyalty upon their opponents."³⁰

Richard of York's claim to the throne is not mentioned in the poems, nor is his defeat and death at the battle of Wakefield on 30 December 1460. The great dynastic issue in the war was not treated until after Edward IV had been accepted as King. After his coronation it was expedient to circulate propaganda emphasizing his right to the throne, in order to secure his position. Edward's accession followed his victory at Mortimer's Cross on 2 February 1461. The battle is recalled with those at Towton and Northampton in "A Political Retrospect," 1462. After tracing the royal succession from the time of Richard II, the poet

³⁰Oman, p. 394.

presents the three battles as steps in Edward's accession to the throne. All his enemies were "myscheyeved & put to flyght" (l. 83), and the poet asks his audience to

remembre hys fortune with chevalry,
Which at Northamptoun gate the victory,
And at mortimers crosse he had the honnour (ll. 84-86).

The Battle of Mortimer's Cross is renowned for the illusion of three suns appearing in the sky just before the battle, which, because of the association with the Trinity, Edward and his troops regarded as a favorable portent.

When the author of "A Political Retrospect" recalls Edward's most decisive victory of the war (and the bloodiest), the Battle of Towton, 29 March 1461, he emphasizes it as a sign that "god lovyth þat knyght" (Edward). He does not refer to the victory by name but by the feast day it took place: "On palme sonday he wan the palme of glorye: (l. 87). The battle is the subject of "Battle of Towton." In his account of the victory the poet refers to Edward by his father's cognizance, the rose, which Edward assumed upon Richard of York's death, and in the last line of each stanza the poet calls blessings upon "þe time þat god sprad þat floure." The Lancastrian and Yorkist leaders are, again, referred to by their animal insignias. Like most Yorkist poets, the author of "Battle of Towton" emphasizes the role of the Earl of Warwick:

The wey into þe northe cuntre þe rose ful fast he sought;
With hym went þe ragged staf, þat many man dere bought; (ll. 31-32)

he also alludes to the third most important Yorkist, John Mowbray, Earl of Norfolk, the "white lyon:"

So þan did þe white lyon--ful worthely he woought.
Almighti ihesu blesse his soule þat þo armes ought (ll. 33-34).

Norfolk's role in the battle was of vast importance because his arrival with reinforcements swung the battle in Edward's favor. However, preoccupied with the cognizances of the leaders, the poet gives no hint of their actions in the battle. After identifying the major Yorkist commanders, the poet refers to how

The fissue hoke cam into þe felde with ful egre mode,
 So did þe cornysse choughe & brouȝt forthe all hir frode;
 Þer was þe blak ragged staf, þat is hope trewe & goode;
 Þe brideld horse; þe watyr bouge be þe horse stode (ll. 36-40).

Thomas Neville (the fissue hoke") commanded the Yorkist left wing.³¹ The other leaders referred to in this stanza are John, Lord Scrope of Bolton (the "cornysse choughe," Lord Grey de Ruthyn (the "blak ragged staf") who had joined the Yorkists at Northampton, William Fitzalan, Earl of Arundle ("the brideld horse"), and Henry, Viscount Courchier (the "water bouge"). Robbins notes that Bouchier, Lord Grey de Ruthyn, Rhomas, Lord Stanley (the "hertes hede"), and Lord Clinton are "not listed in other accounts as present at this battle."³² However, Oman identifies each of these men as participating on the Yorkist side.³³

In his preoccupation with the glories of the Yorkist leaders, the poet neglects the Lancastians slain. As in most battle of the Wars of the Roses, the troops were ordered to slay the leaders of the other side, and at Towton the Lancastrian lords, the Earlof Northumberland, Lord John Neville, Lord Dacre of Gillesland, Lord Welles, Lord Willoughby of Eresby, and Sir Andrew Trollope, the mercenary soldier, were killed.

³¹Identification of the following cognizances is obtained from Robbins' notes, pp. 376-378.

³²Robbins, Notes, p. 361.

³³Oman, p. 408.

The poet stresses that it was God's will that Edward won the battle in order to secure support for the new King and also to justify his fighting on a holy day, which would have been considered sacrilegious. Edward achieved success "by vertu & by grace" (l. 69), and again, in each stanza the poet blesses "þe tyme that euer god spred þat floure."

The poem concludes with Edward's coronation at Westminster, 28 June 1461. Rejoicing that Edward "wan þe victorie, þe feld, & also þe chace," the writer describes how

The Rose cam to loue london, ful ryally rydyng.
ii erchbisshops of england þei crowned þe rose kyng (ll. 66, 71-72).

The two archbishops who crowned Edward were Thomas Bouchier, Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York. The coronation is also celebrated in "Edward Dei Gratia." The author welcomes Edward as King and emphasizes that he is restoring the true line, which was interrupted by Henry IV's usurpation:

Oute of þe stoke that longe lay dede
God hathe causede the to sprynge & sprede,
And of al Englund to be the hede,
Edwardes, dai gracia (ll. 5-8).

The author of "Twelve Letters" also rejoices in the coronation. In the narrative opening the poet depicts a woman embroidering letters which represent the major Yorkist lords, Richard of York, Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, the Earl of Warwick, and the newly-crowned Edward IV. The twelve letters are the first letters of each man's name, title, and cognizance. Praising these men for rescuing the country from the Lancastrian regime, the poet stresses to his audience that "all englund is be-holden to" the Yorkists (l. 24). He is particularly effusive in his praise of Edward's birth, virtue, and military prowess, which make him a desirable and righteous king. Because of his victories against the Lancastrians,

Edward's "fame þe erþe shal sprede" (l. 29). The poet presents Edward as the nearest descendent of Richard II,

Conseived in wedlok, & comyn of blode ryall,
Ioyning vnto vertu, excludyng all vices (ll. 35-36).

Following the tendency of minstrels to depict the king as heaven-blessed and a knight of Christ, the poet closes with an invocation to Christ to preserve the Yorkist regime; to stress the connection between the King and Christ, the author refers to Christ as

þe prynce moste precious & pure
þat syttyth with his seyntis in blys eternall (ll. 69-70),

who will ensure that the Yorkists'

entent & purpos may last & endure
To þe plesaunce of god, & þe welfare of vs all (ll. 71-72).

The rebellion of the Earl of Warwick, which nearly terminated Edward's reign, is treated by a Lancastrian poet in "Willikin's Return" and by a Yorkist adherent in "Battle of Barnet." The author of "Willikin's Return," Robbins notes, "looks forward to the return of the Earl of Warwick (Wylekyn) to restore Henry VI in September 1470; the use of the "Nowel" refrain may move forward the composition nearer Christmas, after the restoration of Henry in October."³⁰ The minstrel rejoices that Warwick, like a lost sheep that has returned to the fold, has forsaken the Yorkists, and now cleaves to Henry and the Lancastrians:

þis Ioly gentyl schep,
all to houre combely kyng hary þis cnat ys knyht (ll. 1-2).

The third and fourth stanzas anticipate Warwick's return to his brother John Neville, Marquess of Montagu, and to "my lorde fueryn, þat neuer dyd fayle." "My lorde fueryn" has so far been unidentified. I suggest that "fueryn" is not necessarily a christian or baronial name because the poet obviously delights in using Warwick's nickname "wylekyn", and

he refers to Montagu as "my lorde chamberlayne" rather than by his name, while Prince Edward is "my lorde prynce" (ll. 8, 5). The nickname "fueryn" would undoubtedly have been recognized by the poet's general audience, but such names often do not retain identification over hundreds of years.

While the Lancastrian author or "Willikin's Return" rejoices in Warwick's invasion, the Yorkist minstrel who composed "Battle of Barnet" takes joy in Warwick's defeat and death at Barnet. The author depicts the battle not only as a decisive Yorkist victory, but as proof that Edward is the rightful king of England. After this battle

now regneth ryghtwysly oure souerayn,
Trew enherytour to the crowne, hys quarell preueth so (ll. 2-3).

Edward has proven that

he ys worthy to be loyd and dred;
Hys glorious victory bereth record
That he ys both pacyent and sad (ll. 18-20).

Political propaganda was expedient during this period in which one regime was trying to retain its power, while a former one was attempting to regain control. The poet touches on Edward's military power, his birth, and God's approval of him to persuade the common people to recognize the King.

Although to contemporary poets and their audiences Edward embodied all kingly virtues, he was not able to prevent the outbreak of more fighting and the disruption of domestic peace that accompanied Warwick's invasion. When Edward was crowned in 1461 the long hostilities appeared to have ended. In 1462 the author of "A Political Retrospect" depicted England as

a gardayne,
Which þat hath ben ouergrowen many yere
With wedys, which must be mowen doune playne,

And þan schul the pleasant swete herbes appere.
 Wherefore all trew englyssh people, pray yn fere
 ffor kyng Edward of Rouen, oure comfortoure,
 That he kepe Iustice and make wedis clere (ll. 73-79).

Edward's reign would have continued to be regarded as the end of the Wars of the Roses had it not been for Henry VII's usurpation. Poets do not depict his seizure of the throne as an end to hostilities, but they do regard his marriage to Edward IV's daughter, Elizabeth of York as bridging the enmity between the two factions. The lyrics "The Lily White Rose" and "The Roses Entwined" depict the marriage of Henry VII and Elizabeth as a union of the red rose of Lancaster and the white rose of York. The author of "The Lily White Rose" depicts Elizabeth as a "comly quene" gathering flowers and deciding that "þe white rose is most trewe" (ll. 2, 11). But in "The Roses Entwined" the two flowers are firmly joined:

'The rose it is a ryall floure.'
 'The red or the white? shewe his coulour!'
 'both be full swete & of lyke savoure:
 all on they be,
 that day to se,
 it lykyth well me' (ll. 25-30).

It is ironic that Henry VII was the man who ended the Wars of the Roses. He attained the throne through conquest and secured it by marrying Elizabeth, but he did not possess the qualities that the poets praised in Edward IV and which they felt justified Edward's reign. No minstrel terms Henry VII a comforter, and more important, no poet could have justly acclaimed Henry as "trew enherytor" of the crown.

CONCLUSION

" . . . A man who understands about people hasn't any yen to write history. History is toy soldiers . . . it's moving little figures about on a flat surface. It's half-way to mathematics, when you come to think about it."

Josephine Tey
The Daughter of Time

Poets of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and their wide audiences were moved by a growing feeling of nationalism that frequently was expressed in a desire to subjugate Scotland and to cling to the ideal of an Anglo-French realm ruled by an English king. But along with their desire to bring other nations under their dominion, people of England yearned for domestic peace, which the Peasants' Revolt ominously threatened. When poets viewed the Rising of 1381 they showed neither interest in nor condemnation of the grievances of the peasants; they saw the revolt as a destruction of domestic peace. Their reaction was not unlike that of a twentieth-century public during a strike by civil servants. When domestic peace was obstructed by the civil wars of the fifteenth century between York and Lancaster, poetry became inspired not by nationalism but by partisanship. The poets had no alien enemy to attack during the Wars of the Roses, so their method for manipulating their audiences was the glorification of the heroes of their parties and the condemnation of corrupt leaders in the government. Since the days when English military leaders like Henry V had dominated most of France were passed, the people of England needed to create heroes who performed glorious deeds on their own soil. Military power was still important to the poets and their audiences during the Wars of the Roses, but since the conflict was a feud between two dynasties, new grounds had to be developed for glorifying leaders. The dynastic issue prompted writers of propaganda

poetry to stress the bloodline of the lords they praised. Although both Lancastrian and Yorkist poets lauded their kings, the Yorkists were on stronger ground on the dynastic issue, and their presentation of Edward IV as the restorer of "þe stoke that longe lay dede" had greater appeal to the imagination of the common people than did verses by the Lancastrians, who could only assert that Henry VI was

meke & benigne,
Pacient in aduersite.

Poetry on the Wars of the Roses tends to resurrect former kings as a means of either securing or undermining a contemporary ruler. The Lancastrian poets were more successful with poetry that was nostalgic than with that touching on the factual issue of inheritance. They harked back to the glories of Henry V (but avoided mentioning Henry IV). The Yorkists went back further, condemning Henry IV's usurpation and reclaiming Richard II's reputation in order to suggest that Edward IV was the rightful heir of Edward III. Again, the glorifications of Edward IV had a romantic appeal for the common people, to whom he appeared as a long-lost heir returning, like Arthur, to claim his throne. Robbins observes, as well, a practical reason for the appeal of Yorkist poetry:

. . . the town generally had tried to avoid participation in the Wars of the Roses, but on the whole (especially London) favored the Yorkists because the leading Lancastrians were marcher lords and more attached to feudal ways. The Yorkist verses, therefore, had a potentially wider appeal; they are generally superior to the Lancastrian efforts.¹

One has only to view the triteness of the ship analogy in the Lancastrian poem "The Ship of State" beside the lyrical charm of "Edward, Dei Gratia" to perceive the justness of this statement.

¹Robbins, *Intro.*, p. xlvi.

Still, the forces that prompted poetry on the Wars of the Roses, as well as on the Hundred Years War, the Scottish War of Independence, and the Peasants' Revolt, also hindered it from being great art. The author of "Edward, Dei Gratia" possesses a zealous devotion to King Edward, but he is incapable of objectifying it in verse; consequently, in his desire to glorify Edward, he ventures onto shakey ground by terming the virile nineteen year-old Edward a "vergyne knight." Likewise, there is passion in the war poetry of Laurence Minot, but it is not passion that is drawn from within the poet and objectified to the point of being art.

It was a much later poet who was able to fuse nationalism, history, and even propaganda into great and vital art. Shakespeare could create a portrait of Henry V that honored his glorious military career, but that could appeal even to a pacifist, and in Richard III elevate the form of a poem of personal abuse to such a level that even a devotee of the White Boar could admire the portrayal of base villainy.

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